

# Calls for merit

Nst 2 1 MAY 2002

# system to continue

## ‘Fine-tune it to ensure fairness for all’

**By Chok Suat Ling**

*sling@nstp.com.my*

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Several educationists and politicians want the merit system to continue for subsequent public university intakes.

However, there were calls for it to be fine-tuned to allow for fairer distribution of places among the races.

National Union of Tamil School Teachers secretary-general Shahul Hamid Mydin Shah said the merit system should be continued but must be combined with the race-based quota system.

This, he contended, would help promote racial integration at universities as it would ensure places were not monopolised by a particular race.

“If the majority of students in university comprise of only one race, the environment will not be conducive for the promotion of ra-

cial integration.”

Umno Youth education bureau chief Dr Adham Baba said the merit system should not be discontinued on the basis that more Bumiputera students were accorded places this year.

“When the merit system was first mooted, it received widespread support. So all those who have supported the move should continue to give their support.

“Subsequent intakes may also see the balance change if more non-Bumiputera students sit the Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia instead of pursuing their studies at private institutions.”

He said the merit system would help ensure students worked hard to secure a place in the course of their choice.

Malaysian Youth Council president Saifuddin Abdullah said the people must be brave enough to “say yes to meritocracy”.

“This is because the merit system gives a fair opportunity to stu-

dents of all races to secure places.

“If there are any problems now relating to the distribution of places according to race, all parties should view it only as a temporary problem as the distribution might be different next year.”

National Union of the Teaching Profession secretary-general Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam said the merit and quota systems should be “married” for subsequent intakes.

“If there are 10 places for medicine, all should not be given to one race. It must be mixed,” he said, adding that a merger would ensure that all races were represented.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday the Government would carry out a study on whether meritocracy or a new system combined with the quota system would be used in admission to public universities next year to ensure fairness for all races.

He said this had to be done as the increase in Bumiputera intake this year was totally unexpected.