

PM: Plan is to help integration

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PUTRAJAYA: The allocation of matriculation places for non-bumiputra students from next year is intended to help Malay students integrate with other races, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Prime Minister said experience had shown that Malay students who did not integrate with other races might face difficulties interacting.

What was happening now was

that some matriculation students, especially those from the Mara colleges, did not know students of other races at all, he said after the second session of the pre-Budget dialogue here yesterday.

"That's why we want to allocate 10% of places in matriculation courses as soon as possible," he said, commenting on a Cabinet decision to make the allocation from next year.

This makes this year's batch of non-bumiputra SPM school-leavers eligible for places in the 22 matric-

ulation centres nationwide. At present non-bumiputra students apply to enter public universities with their Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM).

This move, however, does not mean that more places would be available to non-bumiputras in public universities, as candidates would still have to compete for entry based on merit.

Asked if the decision would upset some Malays, Dr Mahathir said: "The world that we live in today has other races.

"If we do not know other races at all from young, we cannot interact with them. We can't always live with a fence around us. If we do that, we won't be able to compete with anyone in the future."

On the proposal by the Terengganu government to enforce a Syariah Criminal Bill on Hudud and Qisas, the Prime Minister said Terengganu should submit a draft of the planned legislation to the Attorney-General's Chambers.

Dr Mahathir said the A-G would have to examine if the proposed law is consistent with Federal laws and the concept of justice.

"In Islam, justice is of primary importance. If something is not just, we cannot do it.

"But it looks like they (the Terengganu government) are not concerned about justice. They are considering it from a procedural perspective.

"Procedure does not determine justice," he said.