

PM: NO NEED FOR QUOTA

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By FOO YEE PING

PETALING JAYA: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has voiced his support for a no-quota practice for bumiputra students in private institutions of higher learning (IPTS), saying the admission of such applicants should not be limited.

"Why should there be a quota of 10% if there are many qualified bumiputra students?" asked the Prime Minister.

The seats for bumiputras in IPTS should not be confined to a quota, especially if there was a large number of qualified applicants, he told reporters upon arriving at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang yesterday after a week-long working visit to the Vatican City, Switzerland and Luxembourg from June 5.

Asked about the quota issue in

IPTS, which had led to one minister calling a colleague "arrogant", Dr Mahathir said the matter arose out of a misunderstanding.

"Why confine to 10% if you can have 15% or more?" he said.

Last week, Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein was upset with MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik for not accepting a proposal for a 10% quota in IPTS.

Subsequently, Dr Ling said he would meet Hishammuddin to clear the air. Prior to that, he had stated that Tunku Abdul Rahman College and Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman would accept any number of bumiputras who wanted to study there, so there was no need for a quota.

Dr Mahathir said public universities had previously limited the

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number of bumiputra students to 55%.

"This meant that many qualified ones couldn't study there, so when we opened it up this year, more than 60% were bumiputras," he added.

If there were a large number of bumiputras who met the criteria to enter the IPTS but failed to do so because of a quota, then "that is wrong," he said.

The Cabinet decided on Wednesday that there should be more bumiputras studying in IPTS but said no quota was necessary.

On a request by an envoy from Pakistan that Malaysia play a role in helping to ease tension between India and Pakistan, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia might not be effective in that sense since others like the United States could not have an influence on the matter.

"We have stated our stand. A military confrontation is of no use. There should be consultations," he said.

On a separate issue, Dr Mahathir said it was up to the Anti-Corruption Agency whether to call up Tan Sri Eric Chia in its probe on Perwaja.

Neither was it for him to comment whether the ACA would require the testimonies of officials from Swiss banks, he added.