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PM: No need for 10pc quota (HL)

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PETALING JAYA, Fri. - There is no need for a 10 per cent quota for Bumiputera students at private institutions of higher learning as this may work against the community in future, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said Bumiputera participation in such institutions should not be limited to a specific percentage as their numbers could grow in years to come.

"Why confine it to 10 per cent if you can have 50 or 60 or even 100 per cent?"

"There are private institutions where we have large numbers of Bumiputera students. So, if you say 10 per cent, you are limiting them. If they are qualified, they should be allowed in .. any number, why limit them?"

The Prime Minister was speaking at a Press conference at the RMAF Subang air base this morning upon his return from a week-long working visit to the Vatican, Luxembourg and Switzerland.

Dr Mahathir said the quota system had in fact discriminated against Bumiputera students at public universities in recent years, as they had been limited to 55 per cent of the overall intake.

"This is what happened at government universities. The number of Bumiputera students who qualified is much more than the quota. All the time, they have been given the quota of 55 per cent. So many Bumiputera students could not join despite being qualified.

"This year, as you know, they are qualified. So more than 60 per cent were admitted into public universities," he said.

Dr Mahathir said private universities should be prepared to admit even a large number of Bumiputeras if they were qualified.

"If you fix it at 10 per cent, then even if they are qualified, they can't get in ... this is not right," he said.

The Prime Minister also dismissed as a "misunderstanding" the recent spat between Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein and MCA president Datuk Seri Ling Liong Sik over the issue.

On a suggestion by Umno Youth that the Umno party elections be postponed until after the next general election, Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said it was up to delegates at the coming Umno general assembly to deliberate on and decide.

"It is not for me to decide. You have to ask the delegates," Dr Mahathir said.

Umno deputy president and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who was also present at the Press conference, said three motions had been tabled for debate at the general assembly, which begins on Tuesday.

Abdullah said these would be on education, religion and society, and the presidential address.

Asked if the general assembly would be the last before Parliament was dissolved to make way for the 12th general election, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't know, maybe you know better ... so I don't have to answer."

On the Swiss Government's readiness to assist Malaysia in its probe into the Perwaja scandal, Dr Mahathir said they would co-operate by providing information on all financial transactions related to the company.

Asked if Swiss officials would be called to testify and if Perwaja's

former managing director, Tan Sri Eric Chia, would be charged, the Prime Minister said the question should be directed to the Anti-Corruption Agency.

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