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Varsity merit system stays (HL)

Chok Suat Ling

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The Government has decided that the merit system, used for the first time last year for admission into public universities, will continue for all subsequent intakes, including the new academic session this year.

"A decision has been made that it would be a continuing policy," Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad said today.

"We will use the same system.

"The Higher Education Department will be issuing a circular soon informing all universities of the decision.

"The merit system will be used to determine entry into all public university faculties.

"We will not combine the quota and merit systems as was proposed by certain quarters last year," Musa said after presenting his New Year message to Ministry staff at the Technology Education Division in Bukit Kiara today.

The decision to introduce meritocracy was made following a public outcry last year.

Under the merit system, students were put in a single list instead of separate lists for each race.

A student's place in the list will depend solely on his academic achievement.

A computer system was used to select eligible students based on how high they were in the list.

Merit is based solely on the academic achievements of students and cocurricular activities are no longer taken into consideration unlike in previous years when they took up 10 points.

Co-curricular activities would only be taken into account if more than one student had the same academic points and a decision had to be made as to who was eligible.

Although many parties had initially supported meritocracy over a race-based quota system, they later questioned whether it was fair.

Everything about the intake exercise was put under scrutiny - from whether it is just to put matriculation and Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia holders in one list for comparison, to the inability of diploma holders to secure places.

Following the complaints, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said in May last year that the Government would study whether meritocracy or a new system combined with the quota system would be used this year.

Musa had said that the Ministry would study the possibility of merging the merit and race-based quota systems as both had their benefits.

Many educationists have come out in support of the merit system and lauded its many benefits.

Musa, in his speech, said from this year, 10 per cent of places in fully residential schools and matriculation colleges would be allocated to non-Bumiputera students.

Meanwhile, the Ministry's public relations officer, Julina Johan, said from this year, all Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia and STPM holders could use the Internet to apply for places at public universities.

Candidates who want to make online applications need not buy application forms issued by the Higher Education Department.

Students can get more information on the programmes available via the website at <http://emoe.gov.my>.

Applicants need only pay a processing fee at any Bank Simpanan Nasional branch after which they would be given an identification number. The processing fee is RM15.60 for post-STPM courses and RM10.60 for post-SPM courses.

SPM holders who want to buy application forms can do so from Feb 10, while forms for STPM holders were already available from Jan 6.

Forms for STPM holders were also distributed to schools from Nov 20 to Dec 2, while those for SPM holders will be distributed from Jan 3 to 22.

Julina said the forms were sufficient as 80,000 sets had been printed for post-STPM courses, and 250,000 for post-SPM courses.