

Muhyiddin defends PSD scholarship formula
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Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said in Abuja, Nigeria the disputed formula for awarding Public Service Department (PSD) education scholarships had been in use for a long time and was based on fair criteria.

Certain quarters had expressed dissatisfaction now because those seeking the scholarships were many and the government did not have the capacity to give the scholarships to everyone, he told reporters today.

NONEMuhyiddin, who is also education minister, was asked to comment on remarks expressed by the Federation of Peninsula Malay Students (GPMS), Pertubuhan Pribumi Perkasa Malaysia (Perkasa) and representatives of the Indian and Chinese communities over the Education Ministry's explanation of the criteria to secure the PSD scholarships.

Recent news reports quoted GPMS and Perkasa as seeking to retain the bumiputera quota for the scholarships at 60 percent while the Chinese community wanted the scholarships to be given out based on merit and the Indian community wanted the quota for the Indians to be raised from the current 10 percent to 25 percent.

"The formula in use can be said to be a fair one," Muhyiddin said when asked whether the government would retain it.

Muhyiddin had attended the seventh summit of the Group of 8 (D8) Islamic countries, which concluded in Abuja, Nigeria, yesterday.

He said the ministry's statement on the matter was issued based on a cabinet decision and he was instructed to discuss it with the PSD.

"In the discussions with the PSD, we found that the basis used was reasonable," he said.

Muhyiddin said that prior to the issuing of the press statement, he had chaired a meeting attended by representatives of MCA, MIC and other BN component parties, from Sabah and Sarawak, to explain the issue.

"At the meeting, they felt that the PSD decision was appropriate based on the capacity of the government in providing the scholarships," he said.

Four categories

He said there were four categories of selection for the PSD scholarships - based on merit regardless of race; based on race where the majority recipients were bumiputeras; students from Sabah and Sarawak; and the poor and those with less excellent results.

In a statement last Tuesday, Muhyiddin said the government had provided 1,750 PSD scholarships for SPM school leavers with outstanding results in nine subjects to pursue studies abroad.

The PSD had received 18,844 applications for the scholarships, and 10,956 applicants met the minimum requirements of the fields of study.

Muhyiddin said students should not apply only for the PSD scholarships because they could also go for the scholarships provided by Petronas, Mara and certain foundations.

Replying to a question, he said the government could not intervene in the differences of opinion expressed by the MCA and Perkasa on certain issues, but added that it was important for them not to go to the extent of jeopardising security.

"I don't think the government can intervene and issue directives to say you have to comply or you have to toe the line. This is what democracy is all about. They have the right to express; some people agree, some people disagree," he said.

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