

'BUMI VARSITY QUOTA WILL BE RETAINED'

Efforts should be taken to ensure top non-Bumi students get a fair chance, says PM

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THE quota system for Bumiputera students should be retained to maintain racial balance in public higher learning institutions.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday said any effort to do away with the system would lead to an imbalance of Malay student enrolment in certain varsity programmes.

"I wish to point out several principles in the (federal) constitution that guarantee opportunities for Malay and Bumiputera children, for them to be given room to compete... this we will maintain.

"If we do away with that, we will see disparities like that which took place at Universiti Malaya in the 1960s and 1970s.

"In the Engineering Faculty, the number of Malay students was zero.

"In the medical faculty, only 12 per cent. So the late Royal Professor Ungku Abdul Aziz Ungku Abdul Hamid and the (Education) Ministry at the time made an effort to help Malay students so that they could compete."

He said this in a "Temu Anwar" dialogue session with students at Universiti Utara Malaysia here.

Anwar, however, acknowledged that efforts should be taken to ensure that non-Malay and non-Bumiputera students with excellent results get a fair chance and were not denied a place in universities.

"We need to find other means to provide more space for non-Bumiputera students so that they are not sidelined."

He said should the government do away with the quota policy now, it would create tension and become a political polemic.

He addressed the unease by opposition leaders over his engagement sessions with varsity students, and their accusations that he should focus on his duties as prime minister.

He said his tour of universities was to allow him to hear students' views and aspirations.

"For example, when I attended a programme in Langkawi, a student touched on the e-Belia cash aid distribution.

"The next day, when I came to the office, I instructed the cash aid to be channelled before Hari

Raya Aidiladha.

"There was another suggestion concerning students not being paid during internship.

"This resonated with me, so I raised the issue at a gathering with the Securities Commission, the Bourse and corporate figures in Kuala Lumpur.

"I told them to listen the grouses raised by the youngsters who wish to be compensated for their work."

He stood by his claim that the former Perikatan Nasional administration did not waive Felda settlers' debt of RM8.3 billion.

"Today, former prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the prime minister lied because this had been resolved in 2021.

"As the finance minister, I just signed the settlement at the end of June. So which part of the settlement did you claim was done in 2021?

"Yes, there was an agreement, but it was not settled (in) the 2021 Budget under PN, as well as the 2022 Budget under PN.

"There was no allocation to settle Felda (settlers') debt. I stand by this."

He said it was only in the 2023 Budget, under the Madani government last November, that the allocation was included.

"I have channelled RM990 million in an initial allocation to write off Felda debts, which in total amounts to RM8.3 billion."