

'NO CHANGE TO BUMI MATRICULATION QUOTA'

PM cites
Longstanding
practice, alignment
with Article 153
of Constitution

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THE government has given its assurance that the Bumiputera quota system under the Education Ministry's matriculation programme will remain unchanged.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday emphasised the importance of maintaining the quota for Bumiputeras, citing its longstanding practice and alignment with Article 153 of the Constitution.

Article 153 reserves quotas for Malays and natives of Sabah and Sarawak in various services and permits.

This, Anwar said, was despite his announcement on Sunday that students who obtained 10As and above in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination would be guaranteed a place in any matriculation programme regardless of race.

Anwar said the matriculation placement often sparked discussion and controversy.

"So we have chosen a path that we believe is fair and reasonable. If they (the students) are citizens and residents of Malaysia, we must protect them.

"At the same time, we must acknowledge the reality of meritocracy. So whomever achieves 10As, regardless of race, we guarantee them a place in matriculation.

"What will happen to the Bumiputera quota?

"It must be maintained because it has long been associated with Article 153 of the Constitution and guarantees the future of Malays and Bumiputeras to prevent disparities."

He said this at the Prime Minister's Department's monthly assembly.

He said the government's decision to guarantee a place in any matriculation programme for students who obtained 10As regardless of race was to address the issue of fairness in educa-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim speaking at the Prime Minister's Department's monthly assembly in Putrajaya yesterday. With him are Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof (right) and Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (religious affairs) Dr Zulkifli Hasan. BERNAMA PIC

tion.

"After so many years of independence, our children or, I would say, our grandchildren, have been striving to compete in education, particularly in the context of SPM, aiming for greater excellence.

"More and more of them are achieving 10As, be it Malays, Chinese, Indians and those from Sabah and Sarawak.

"Each time, because of the Bumiputera quota, it raises exaggerated issues.

"Some, on one hand, argue about minority rights.

"On the other hand, there's also the need to uphold constitutional principles and ensure opportunities for Bumiputeras, who are often in the lower socio-economic status.

"So this decision should momentarily ease the tension that the Education Ministry has to face almost every year."

He said the details would be disclosed by Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek.

He said meritocracy, although upheld, should not become a rigid ideology.

"If it continues, who will represent the disadvantaged?

"As a Madani government, we must be compassionate.

"Wanting this country to progress means we must uphold the best form of meritocracy, where those who are capable and bright are encouraged.

"But at the same time, we must not forget about the poor and marginalised.

"I do not want to be apologetic

in defending this," he said.

On Sunday, Anwar, in his speech at the closing of the National Training Week in Bukit Jalil, announced that all students who obtained 10As and above in SPM will be guaranteed a place in any matriculation programme regardless of race.

He said the decision was made by the cabinet last Friday.

On another development, he cautioned against excessive discussion of BlackRock's investments in the country, warning of potential harm to national interests.

He said the government's stand on the Gaza and Palestinian issue had always been clear and pronounced, compared with other countries.

"Historically, and compared with other countries, we are among the most clear and firm, when it comes to our stand on Gaza.

"So let's not make excessive demands. We are a developing country, and we need to assess our capabilities.

"Let's not, out of a desire to show that we are great, jeopardise our national interests."

He added that every time he made foreign visits, he would never forget to state Malaysia's stand on the issue.

"When speaking in front of (United States President) Joe Biden and other statesmen, I upheld this principle. At the same time, I want to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our people."