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Cabinet to get paper on takeover of religious schools

PETALING JAYA, Mon. - The Education Ministry will submit a working paper to the Cabinet soon on taking over the administration of 210 public religious secondary schools.

Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today the takeover was necessary to "safeguard the future" of the students, who were being denied quality education while being exploited for political gains by the opposition.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had agreed in principle to the administrative takeover, Najib said after launching the "University On Air" programme of Universiti Tun Abdul Razak.

"Many of these schools are sorely lacking in academic content, facilities and teachers, most of whom have no qualification," he said, adding that the low pay did not attract high-calibre teachers.

"There are about 70,000 students in these schools and their future will be in jeopardy if we do not step in. We will provide trained teachers and a strong curriculum," he said, adding that they will follow the national curriculum and offer additional Islamic studies.

The Government realised that these schools were very popular, Najib said. In the Federal Territory alone, only 25 per cent of applicants were able to get a place.

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