

05 JUL 1999  
School-Oppose  
KEDAH ULAMAS OPPOSE TAKEOVER OF SMAR

KUALA LUMPUR, July 5 (Bernama) -- The Kedah Ulama Association (PUK) today opposed the government's proposed takeover of all Sekolah Menengah Agama Rakyat (SMAR) nationwide to improve facilities at the schools.

PUK president Abu Bakar Awang, however, said the association wanted the government to give adequate allocation to improve the SMAR infrastructure without imposing any condition.

In a two-page statement, he urged the government to shelve the proposal for the takeover of SMAR.

Abu Bakar claimed that the proposed takeover of SMAR was being made based on the preception that they were being influenced by certain political parties.

"This shallow and negative perception is unfounded and highly influenced by narrow and insincere objectives," said Abu Bakar, who is also a member of the Pas central committee.

He cited three reasons why PUK rejected the government's proposal to take over SMAR -- they were set up through donations from the local community; they are open to all students from all strata of society irrespective of their political leanings.

And, if there is any tendency for any SMAR to align itself with any particular group, this is due to the actions of the government itself which did not want to recognise the system upheld by SMAR.

"It's the government itself that does not appreciate the contribution of the SMAR in strengthening Islamic teachings in the country," he said.

The proposal was earlier opposed by Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, who is also Pas spiritual leader, on grounds that the government did not have the experience to handle the SMAR and feared that the standard of Islamic education would deteriorate.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said on Saturday that the government would find ways to see how the proposal could be implemented as he wanted the SMAR and its students to receive better facilities.

Meanwhile in KOTA BAHARU, the Kelantan government defended the SMAR in the state as the best compared to the other states where the management of SMAR was handled by the central government.

State Exco for Islamic Development, Education, Dakwah and Information Mohamed Daud said 90 public religious schools in Kelantan were given special attention by the Pas-led government which allocated significant fund for their development.

"The state government allocated RM30 million a year for the management of the public religious schools," he told reporters today.

He said the state government had also implemented salary adjustment for teachers of such schools which involved an increase in salary from RM300 to RM475 a month.

-- BERNAMA  
RAR AO