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Protest plan by Pas Youth over funding for schools

ALOR STAR, Thurs. - Pas Youth has threatened to hold a protest gathering here tomorrow evening unless the Government resumes funding for all privately-run People's Religious Schools (Sekolah Agama Rakyat).

The movement's chief, Mahfuz Omar, said: "If the schools do not get it by tomorrow, they will not be able to pay the teachers' salaries and general maintenance for next year. Right now they are in a quandary whether to open or close for next year.

"Some may have to raise the fees, which is currently RM100 a year, or let go some of the teachers."

He said this at a Press conference at the party headquarters today.

"This may affect the enrolment as parents may not be able to afford the new fees and decide to send their children to government schools."

Eventually, he said, the future of these schools would be affected and some might close permanently.

In Kedah, he said there were 43 schools with 25,000 pupils which had registered with the Religious Department and expected to get some RM2.1 million from the Government.

Last year, the Government gave RM2.6 million to 45 schools.

"They should have got the money earlier this year but with the delay, they were forced to find money on their own. Some schools managed to survive as they derive income from their wakaf land while others depend on donations."

He said the gathering would be held at the party's Muasasah Darul Ulum after the tarawih (non-obligatory prayers performed during the fasting month).

On Oct 22, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced the move, claiming the schools have been misused to teach children politics instead of religion.

He said the funding would only be resumed after the Government could distinguish the genuine schools from those used for political purposes.