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Kedah waiting for directive on status of religious schools

ALOR STAR, Sun. - The State Government is awaiting a directive from the Federal Government on the status of the 43 Sekolah Agama Rakyat or People's Religious Schools here.

State Religious Affairs executive councillor Fadzil Hanafi said this followed the Federal Government's decision to absorb 126,000 pupils from several hundred such schools nationwide into national schools.

The decision was made at the 88th meeting of Menteris Besar and Chief Ministers on Dec 2. It came in the wake of an earlier announcement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that funding to these schools would be stopped as he felt they had been misused to teach children politics instead of religion.

Fadzil feels it would be up to the parents to decide whether they wanted to take their children out of these schools.

He said the school managements themselves would find it difficult to remain open without the grants from the Federal Government.

"The question of withdrawing the licences of these schools has not arisen. They can still operate," he said.

He said these pupils would not face much difficulty settling into national schools as the syllabus did not differ much.

The pupils could also apply to enter the two Government-run secondary religious schools in Mergong and Sik, he added.

Fadzil said the State has 44 Sekolah Agama Rakyat but only 43 are licensed by the State Islamic Affairs Department.

He added that Pas has a private religious school in Pokok Sena.