

01 FEB 2002

Mahathir-Religion

MADRASAH, PONDOK SCHOOLS TO BE CHECKED, SAYS PM

PUTRAJAYA, Feb 1 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that "madrasah" and "pondok" schools in the country will be checked to determine whether these privately-run religious institutions are actually imparting religious knowledge to their students.

"We need to check whether these "madrasah" and "pondok" schools are imparting religious knowledge or not. I know of "pondok" schools where students take up to 14 years only to learn Usuluddin (Islamic laws).

"So it means that they are not acquiring (religious knowledge)...they were there with other motives. I feel very sad," he told reporters after launching the first anniversary celebrations of the Federal Territory of Putrajaya here.

He was asked to comment on a front-page report of a local daily on the arrest of 12 staff of Sekolah Tarbiyah Islamiyah Luqmanul Hakiem including its principal for investigations related to the Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (KMM) at Sungai Tiram near Johor Baharu a few days ago.

Dr Mahathir said that he had yet to receive a report on the matter.

The prime minister said that the situation was similar to that in Pakistan where religious schools do not teach religion but teach students how to topple governments through violence.

Dr Mahathir said that this was sad as these people were prepared to carry out actions contrary to Islam because they do not study religion but politics to topple governments in such schools.

"It's most unfortunate that when we take action, these people will say that we are obstructing the teaching of religion but in actual fact it is not religion that is taught there," he said.

He said that the government was also planning an integrated curriculum for religious schools and would ensure that the curriculum was adopted by government schools.

This was because even in government schools there were religious teachers injecting political elements when they teach, he said.

Asked whether this matter was sensitive as it could be seen as the federal government's interference in state government affairs, he said that the federal government was responsible for all aspects of education and had the authority in terms of subjects taught in schools.

He said that the aspect on religion was the responsibility of the state government.

Dr Mahathir said that there were state governments who may wish to defend the religious schools and claimed that Islam was being taught there but they were actually defending such places for future use and this certainly deviated from the objectives of education.

"They also use such places to train our children in terms of their ideology and their intention to topple the government.

"Since they are young and impatient, they are prepared to learn about violent means to topple the government," he said.

Meanwhile in PENANG, Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad said that Sekolah Tarbiyah Islamiah Luqmanul Hakiem had been directed to close down as it had been found to have not been registered with the ministry and the Johor Islamic Religious Department.

Speaking to reporters after witnessing the signing of the letter of pledge by heads of departments of Universiti Sains Malaysia, Musa said that all the students of the school would have the opportunity to continue their

studies in government schools.

The ministry was also prepared to consider their applications to study at religious schools, he said.

The residential school has 115 students, in Standard One to Standard Six.

On the arrest of the 12 staff of the school, Musa said that the matter was not within the jurisdiction of the ministry and it was leaving it to the relevant authorities to deal with the matter.

-- BERNAMA

AZE RM