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Musa-Schools

SAR WILL BE ABSORBED TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL SCHOOLS

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 17 (Bernama) -- Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamed said the proposal to absorb Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR) into national schools is to strengthen the later and prepare students for future challenges.

Every party should view the move positively and not politicised it.

"There is nothing to worry about because we want to strengthen our children in facing challenging times. This should not be politicised because we practice democracy.

"We need to explain to the public our intentions, the government's objective and where we want to take the children, looking at the current situation," he told reporters at the Hari Raya Aidilfitri open house celebration held at his residence at Jalan Eaton, here today.

Musa was commenting on the ministry's preparation to face the 2003 school session, including SARs operated by state governments.

Musa said a special committee, chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, was formed to study the existing education system in the country, including SARs.

The committee held its first meeting on Dec 12 and yet to make any decision.

"We are still discussing and I feel we need to go deep into all aspects regarding SARs. It need to be discussed at all levels, including the ministry, state religious affairs department, Malaysia's Islamic Development Department, state governments and the public," he added.

He said the SAR issue is focused at secondary level because religious studies at these schools are not in line with the national school curriculum.

Some 300,000 students, including those from national schools attend SARs at the primary level.

However the government would not make any hasty decision, he added.

The 88th Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers Meeting on Dec 3 decided to absorb about 126,000 SAR students into national schools soon, because existing SARs lack proper facilities and qualified teachers.

When asked whether the move would eliminate SARs completely, Musa said he cannot comment on their future.

"I can't say what will happen to SARs, but can say what our intentions are and what we wish to achieve. How it will be implemented will be discussed later."

Regarding the critical allowances given to Science, Maths and English teachers, Musa said this was done to attract qualified teachers to teach the subjects at all levels.

On the preparations for the new school session, he said teaching materials, text books, training for teachers, infrastructure including for the teaching of Science, Maths and English are ready.

-- BERNAMA