

13/12/2002

DPM: Pupils at People's Religious Schools not getting quality education

ALOR STAR, Thurs. - Sekolah Agama Rakyat or People's Religious Schools are ill-equipped to provide quality education and should be closed down, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said it would be unfair to expect pupils to study there as they would not receive quality education as promised.

He said schools without proper facilities and qualified teaching staff should not be allowed to continue operating.

He said the recent Government's decision for the 126,000 pupils from several hundred schools nationwide to be absorbed into national schools was to ensure they received quality education.

The decision was made at the 88th meeting of Menteris Besar and Chief Ministers on Dec 2.

It followed an earlier announcement on Oct 22 by the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to stop funds to these schools as he felt they had been misused to teach children politics instead of religion.

Abdullah said the Government wanted Muslim children to receive the best education by providing the curriculum and infrastructures, including skilled and trained teachers, and would continue to improve the quality of the Islamic studies currently being taught at national schools.

"In the meantime, I hope they will be patient while we continue to work towards this aim," he said after addressing a gathering of 400 local ulama at the State Umno headquarters at Bangunan Tunku here.

Asked on Singapore's decision against joining Malaysia and four other Asian countries in signing the regional anti-terrorism pact, Abdullah said he hoped it was not a sign of a lack of commitment on its part.

"Maybe they have some problems but I hope this does not mean they are not interested in coming together to resolve a problem shared by all."

During the Hari Raya open house at the Wisma Darul Aman earlier, Abdullah was asked about Mara which had withdrawn education loans to 15 Malaysian students in Jordan, following the reported beating of a Malaysian student there last month.

"I have no objection to the withdrawal because there are reasons why Mara has to pull back the loans. Also if Mara, after having received reports from various countries, decides to no longer send students to those countries, it is an administrative decision on their part."