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Pas SAR committee to ensure fund-raising within the law

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - The Pas committee for the "Save the SAR" (Sekolah Agama Rakyat or People's Religious Schools) campaign will convene a meeting soon to discuss ways to ensure the party does not contravene laws when collecting donations.

Pas vice-president Datuk Dr Hassan Ali said although campaigns held in the past were within the law, there was a need to outline measures to avoid problems with the authorities.

"We are doing this since the campaign is being carried out at various levels nationwide. It is just a precautionary measure," he said.

Hassan who is also the party Education Bureau chairman also maintained that Pas was not soliciting funds from the public.

He said the campaign was held at the party's premises and those who attended the event were either party members or supporters.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Wednesday said it was against the law for anyone to collect funds from the public without approval from the authorities.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno President, was commenting on the "Save the SAR" campaign launched by Pas following the Government's decision to stop financial aid to the privately-run SAR due to widespread deviation from the schools' original syllabus.

Pas collected more than RM100,000 at the launch of the national-level campaign three weeks ago. The State-level campaigns launched by the respective State Pas committees also raised large amounts in donations.

Pas is also seeking the intervention of the Malay Rulers on the SAR issue as it claimed the move would affect the religious education system.

An independent group calling itself Gerakan Bertindak Umat Selamatkan SAR (Gegar), whose objective was to save the schools, had also urged the Council of Malay Rulers to ask the Government to reinstate funding to SAR.

Gegar also wanted the Government to set up a special body to oversee the development of the private religious education system.

Pas central committee member Dr Hatta Mohd Ramli said the party was concerned that the Government was moving towards abolishing the SAR education system.

The recent Menteris Besar and Chief Ministers meeting had decided that some 126,000 students from SAR nationwide be absorbed into national schools next year.