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Pas Youth to take funding concerns to Sultans, Rulers

ALOR STAR, Sun. - Pas Youth will take its grievances over the Government's decision to stop funding privatelyrun People's Religious Schools (Sekolah Agama Rakyat) directly to the Sultans and Rulers.

The movement hopes that they, being State religious heads, will intervene and pressure the Government to review the decision.

Its chief, Mahfuz Omar, said today the movement would seek an audience with the Sultans and Rulers after Hari Raya to discuss the impact on the private religious educational system.

He said Pas Youth would submit a memorandum to express its concern for the future of these schools and to appeal for help.

"Being the head of State Religious Councils, we know the Sultans and Rulers would be concerned about the development of religious schools," he said at the party's headquarters here.

"We just want a chance to explain our side of the story concerning the move.

"We feel the Government made wild allegations about the schools being political as an excuse to abolish the religious school system."

He expressed hope that no outside parties would try to prevent the meeting.

"The Government, which claimed that some schools were found to be teaching politics and hate, should name them and the teachers involved. However, it should not punish other schools."

In Kedah, he said there were 43 schools with 25,000 pupils which had registered with the Religious Department, to get RM2.1 million in funds. Last year, the Government gave RM2.6 million to 45 schools.

On Oct 22, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced the move, claiming the schools had been misused to teach children politics instead of religion.

He said the funding would only be resumed after the Government could distinguish genuine religious schools from political ones.