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Mahathir-Grants

PER CAPITA GRANTS TO SEKOLAH AGAMA RAKYAT STOPPED, SAYS DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 25 (Bernama) -- The Government has stopped giving per capita grants to Sekolah Agama Rakyat after some of the schools are found to have been used for politics, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the Government took the decision to study the status of the schools to ensure they were genuinely teaching religion.

"At the moment, we have stopped assistance to all religious schools (rakyat) until we can distinguish which is religious school, (and) which is political school," he told reporters after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno President, said the government had found that some pupils of Sekolah Agama Rakyat had been taught to hate government leaders.

"Umno members' children who go to these schools have asked their fathers to bring down the picture of the firaun (Pharaoh) when they returned home.

"They have learnt this in school, this is not found in the religious studies," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the per capita grants to Sekolah Agama Rakyat, which have been stopped for sometime, would only resume after the government was satisfied that the schools really taught religion.

He said problems in religious schools were part of the discussions in today's supreme council meeting.

"The government feels these schools are not religious schools but actually political schools," he said.

Dr Mahathir said teaching the pupils to bring down the photograph of a person, said to be the Pharaoh, was not a religious teaching and hence, the government cannot extend aid to such schools.

"I also learn religion but it was never said that there is a Pharaoh and his picture must be brought down," he said.

Asked whether the government would draw up a syllabus for Sekolah Agama Rakyat, he said, the syllabus had been provided but the schools never used it.

He refused to name the group which used the schools for political aims.

Dr Mahathir was also asked on allegations against Puteri Umno pro tem chief Azalina Othman Said, including on her personal lifestyle.

He said those who made such allegations should come up with proof.

Earlier, when asked to state Umno's stand on homosexuality and lesbianism in the party, Dr Mahathir said: "Our stand is very clear, we don't accept this kind of culture. If you are involved with that kind of thing, out you go".

Puteri Umno will hold its inaugural general meeting on Nov 1. Azalina captured all the 165 divisional nominations for the movement's top post.

Dr Mahathir said the supreme council also discussed the policy of using English to teach Science and Mathematics in primary and secondary schools and have decided the party's stand on the matter.

Declining to reveal the stand, he said, the council, Umno's highest decision-making body, had given him the mandate to present the stand at the Barisan Nasional (BN) supreme council meeting next week.

-- BERNAMA

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