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Abdullah-Schools

T'GANU SCHOOL PROJECT STALLED AS STATE REFUSES TO GIVE LAND

KUALA TERENGGANU, Jan 22 (Bernama) -- The construction of 23 schools in Terengganu planned for last year has failed to get off the ground because the state government refuses to provide land for the project, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

The Deputy Prime Minister said the federal government had allocated RM270 million for project, which includes the construction of 11 secondary schools at a cost of RM170 million.

"It's not that we have no capability, it's not that we don't have money, it's not that there are no allocations...we have everything but the project cannot be implemented because there is no land.

"These schools are needed by Terengganu but we cannot undertake the construction because the Terengganu government does not want to cooperate and has not provided land for the project," he told reporters after chairing the Terengganu Umno meeting here.

Abdullah, who is Terengganu Umno chief, said the state government had refused to cooperate although the allocation provided was the normal allocation from the federal government.

"The Terengganu government does not like to receive special payment because it considers it haram and so on...but this is the normal allocation from the federal government to build schools," he said.

He said the state government's attitude was detrimental to the people of Terengganu, especially children who need more places in schools.

"To me, this is a big problem because in order to build schools land must be provided by the state government," he said.

Abdullah said the state government would be reminded to allow the federal government to implement the project.

Asked if the state government feared that the project could be politicised, Abdullah said: "We want to build schools...there is nothing to politicise; we want to build schools for the people."

He said if the state government insisted on not cooperating, the allocations might be used to build schools in other places.

Asked on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohammad's statement that the government might bar PAS from running pre-schools, Abdullah said the government had received complaints from parents that what was taught to their children had political undertones.

"They send their children to these schools in the hope that they can learn religious matters full-time, but some topics not related to religion but with political undertones were included in the programme," he said.

On the meeting, Abdullah said it reviewed Terengganu Umno's performance last year and was satisfied that the activities conducted by the body had attracted more support for Umno.

Following the programmes conducted, many PAS members had agreed to join Umno, he said.

"A total of 5,519 PAS members joined Umno last year, and this is a very good development and shows that they are convinced of Umno's struggle," he said.

Abdullah said Umno had discharged its responsibilities without creating any problems to non-Mulims.

-- BERNAMA

SN YBY