

12 JAN 2003

Mahathir-SAR

GOVERNMENT WILL NOT BAN SAR, DR MAHATHIR

KAMPAR, Perak, Jan 12 (Bernama) -- The Government will not ban the People's Religious Schools (SAR) despite its anti-government teaching but will not give any grant or assistance to them, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Dr Mahathir said that the Government could not support the SAR because it was not teaching religion but had become a political institution.

"But if they want to carry on spoiling the future of the children, we cannot stop them. We are not going to ask them to spoil the future of the children who will go out hating everything," he told a press conference after performing the ground-breaking for the Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Utar) main campus here today.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked on the future of SAR after the Government gave its 74,000 students until Feb 6 to move to national schools.

"If they (students) want to stay in the SAR, they can but we cannot support them. Because it's not religion that is being taught there," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was worried that every child that went to SAR would become anti-government and this was not because of their own doing but due to the teaching there.

He said the schools did not teach religion but taught students never to be grateful and to reject brotherhood among Muslims.

He said practically all these schools, except those owned by the Government, were sowing the seeds of anti-Government feelings and that was why despite being given money and other support, they still hated the Government.

"Furthermore, they are also not qualified teachers. They just want to make money out of education," he said.

Dr Mahathir said there was no need for such schools now compared to the British times when the authorities never paid attention to Islamic religious education.

"So we had pondok and tok guru. But now we are spending money to build schools and religious education is available...why not go to these national schools," he added.

Dr Mahathir said there was more adequate religious education in Government-owned schools and the authorities were also in the process of improving the delivery system.

On suggestions by certain groups that the Government take over the running of SAR, Dr Mahathir said it was not feasible as a lot of money was needed to set up proper schools.

"We have ready made schools, why can't they go there. The teaching of religion is there and we have the syllabuses prepared by the ministry," he added.

Asked on moves by some people to refer the matter to the Conference of Rulers, Dr Mahathir said they could do that but the Government would explain the actual situation to the Rulers.

On the request by certain groups for the Syariah Law to be standardised, Dr Mahathir said it was good and this could be done.

"We are discussing this matter. However there are states which want to go it alone and be different from other states," he added.

-- BERNAMA

AR AR AAM