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Mahathir-SAR

GOVT LOOKING INTO STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS STUDIES SYLLABUS

KOTA BAHARU, Jan 15 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the government is studying whether there is a need to strengthen the syllabus for religious studies at national schools.

"We are looking into whether the religious studies syllabus at national schools is adequate or not," the Prime Minister told a news conference after addressing a leader-with-the-people gathering here.

The government recently announced that the 126,000 students of Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR) would be absorbed into national schools following its decision to stop giving aid to people's religious schools, better known as SAR.

Dr Mahathir said religious education at national schools was aimed at providing Muslim students foundations on religious knowledge and not to make them into ulama.

"We want to provide foundations on Islamic religious knowledge so that they can continue...if they are interested they can continue with religious studies at the university level.

"But if they want to go into other fields, we also provide adequate foundation," he said.

Asked on press reports that SAR students had been told they would go to hell if they joined national schools, Dr Mahathir said this was a big lie of the opposition.

"I would like to ask those who say this, have they been to heaven...have they seen people entering heaven? This is a terrible lie...even voting a party can get one to heaven.

"No human beings can determine whether one goes to heaven or hell...in fact even a very pious person cannot guarantee that he would go to heaven," he said.

Dr Mahathir said parents who sent their children to SAR were victimising them as PAS members and elected representatives themselves were sending their children to national schools.

Earlier, in his speech, Dr Mahathir said the government decided to stop giving aid to SAR because these schools were not teaching Islamic teachings.

He said it would be wrong of the government to abet schools in propagating teachings which were against the teachings of Islam.

"People's religious schools do not teach Islamic education but teachings which are against Islam...they teach students to hate and to be ungrateful to those who give aid when Islam does not teach its followers to hate one another.

"Send them to national schools and we will give them religious education according to the syllabus required by Islam," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government was willing to accept SAR students to give them proper and more comfortable education at national schools, which also have trained teachers.

The government was also willing to give extra allocations to improve the facilities at national schools, including having more classes to accommodate these students, he said.

"What is the point in having pondok schools, people's religious schools which do not have trained teachers and are not comfortable?...there is no need for people's religious schools," he said.

-- BERNAMA

SN YBY