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Hadi-Cartoon

HADI ADMITS CARTOON WAS A MISTAKE, WARNS HARAKAH EDITOR

KUALA TERENGGANU, June 18 (Bernama) -- Acting PAS President Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang admitted today that the publication of a cartoon in Harakah, the party's official organ, was a mistake.

"It's a normal thing in life, we make mistakes...something unintentional which must be corrected," he told reporters after chairing the weekly meeting of the State Executive Council, here.

Hadi, who is also Terengganu Menteri Besar, said he had called Harakah Chief Editor Zulkifli Sulong and advised him to be more careful in future.

He was commenting on the call by many Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders to the Home Ministry to revoke the publishing permit of the paper for publishing a two-frame cartoon entitled "Masalah SARS" (SARS problem), comprising a caricature of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and another of a pig.

Harakah, in a two-paragraph statement, yesterday said it was withdrawing the cartoon, drawn by cartoonist Zunar, which was published in the June 16-30 issue.

The paper also apologised to parties, who felt insulted and took offence over the publication of the cartoon, which it said was not done with malicious intention.

Asked whether it was done on purpose, Hadi said the question should be directed to the person who did it and not to him.

He said it was up to the management of Harakah on whether to take action or not against the cartoonist.

In KOTA BAHARU, PAS Spiritual Adviser Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat said the publication of the cartoon was in bad taste.

"I agree that the apology was proper. When we do something wrong, we should not be stubborn, especially when it comes to something personal like this," he told reporters after chairing the state executive council weekly meeting.

Nik Aziz also expressed regret over accusations by certain parties that the public religious schools (SAR) were a hotbed for terrorists and the teachers were spreading deviationist teachings.

"I feel like getting back at them because it's about Islam and the majority of the teachers are graduates of the University of Al-Azhar in Egypt and other Islamic universities in West Asia. How can they make such a sweeping statement, accusing these people of promoting terrorism and deviationist teachings?" he said.

He said it was appropriate for PAS once in a while to come up with an article or a cartoon in response to such accusations.

"A tit for tat action is human nature but don't make it personal," he said.

--BERNAMA

HIS BD ABG