

08 FEB 2003

Muhyiddin-SAR

PAS MUST RESPECT PALACE INSTITUTION AND NOT INVOLVE IT IN SAR ISSUE

BUTTERWORTH, Feb 8 (Bernama) -- PAS must respect the Constitutional Monarchy system and not drag the institution into its narrow political struggles merely to seek support in championing the issue over Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR) in the country.

Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said today any problem must first be referred to and resolved through proper channels without involving the Rulers' Council in their struggles.

He said although the Rulers had the power as religious head in their respective state, the issue concerning SAR was more related to education and not the religion itself.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting with the Tasek Gelugor Umno Youth, Wanita and Puteri divisional committees here, he said PAS should not be hasty in the SAR issue because much more had yet to be clarified by the government on the matter.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would give clarifications on SAR and the government's move to stop grants to the schools on Feb 13, and all doubts on the matter would be answered after that, he said.

He said this when asked to comment on the move by PAS to seek support from the Rulers' Council on the SAR issue and so far the party's memorandum had already been handed to the Sultan of Terengganu while a non-governmental organisation had met with the Sultan of Perak.

Last month, central PAS Youth head Mahfuz Omar said PAS would try to get the Rulers to include the issue on SAR in the agenda for the Council of Rulers' Conference in March and wanted the Council to make a decision to instruct the government to rescind the order to close SAR.

Muhyiddin said the government was not against the SAR system but was endeavouring to improve religious education in the school which had many shortcomings in terms of teacher training, equipment and proper curriculum.

"We used to read in the newspapers about SAR being on fire, improper hostels, teachers who are not trained and paid low salary. So the government wants to improve the situation," he said.

In another development, he said party members must strive to ensure victory in the coming election would be much better than the previous one which would give a strong mandate to the new leadership.

-- BERNAMA

ZU AO