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Mahathir-SARs

GOVT'S MOVE TO STOP ASSISTANCE NOT TO CLOSE DOWN SARs, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the government has stopped providing financial assistance to privately-run community-based religious schools (SARs) not because it intends to close down all such schools.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said that the move was taken because most of the schools were not imparting Islamic knowledge but injecting political ideology by instilling hatred.

"They may continue operating the SARs. What they need to do is register them as required by the law of our country, in accordance with the Education Act.

"We don't consider these SARs as religious schools, that is why we stop providing the assistance," he said when addressing some 5,000 Umno representatives at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here.

Dr Mahathir however said that there were parties equating this move with the closure of the SARs.

As such, he said, an information session was held today to explain the actual situation relating to the government's decision to stop the financial assistance.

"I found that when we stop the assistance to the SARs, many Umno members and leaders were confused and unable to provide an explanation on why we've stopped the assistance to the SARs," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that many statements had been issued by Umno leaders, state liaison bodies and divisions based on their own conclusion as most of them did not really know or understand why the assistance for the SARs was stopped.

He hoped that the information session would somewhat provide a better understanding to the Umno members on the actual reason for the government to stop the assistance.

The Prime Minister said that the SARs were set up by certain parties and they should be responsible for them but still the government was previously prepared to provide assistance to the SARs.

"But of late we found that they were not SARs because what were taught were not even the Islamic religion but ideology that were contrary to Islam," he said.

He said that almost all the SARs had instilled hatred even among fellow Muslims.

"They should have instead learnt the true teachings of Islam which advocates unity and brotherhood and pursuit of knowledge not only in the Islamic religion but also other subjects," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that if the government were to continue to provide assistance to the SARs, it would mean that the government was abetting in the dissemination of knowledge which were un-Islamic at the SARs.

"If they have taught the true teachings of Islam, not instilling hatred, we're prepared to provide assistance," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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