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PM: Decision to stop funding SAR applies to all

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The Government's decision to stop funding People's Religious School (SAR) applies to all, including institutions run by Umno supporters, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the Government did not make any distinction between schools which impart the politics of hate and those which adhere to the true teachings of Islam when it decided to stop the funding.

"Umno's brand of Islam is the right one. If there are religious teachers who think they teach proper Islam, they can be absorbed into national schools," said Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, at a special briefing on the SAR to the party divisional leaders at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

He was responding to a question from a Perak divisional leader who wanted to know why the Government had stopped funding religious schools in his village, most of which were run by Umno branch chairmen there.

The Perak leader said when the Federal Government stopped the RM60 per student annual grant to the SAR there, the institutions had problems operating.

Dr Mahathir said most of the schools did not impart the proper teachings of Islam.

To another question why the Government chose to stop funding SAR now instead of waiting until after the next general election, Dr Mahathir said "anytime is near to the general election".

Even if the Government were to stop funding the schools five years before the next general election, he said the religious fanatics would still not accept the Government's decision.

He called on divisional leaders to be patient when explaining the decision at the grassroots level.

Another division leader from Perak proposed the Government also stop aid to national-type Chinese and Tamil primary schools, as many non-Malays had also stopped sending their children to national schools.

To this, Dr Mahathir said national-type schools were allowed to continue operating as part of an agreement where non-Malays continue supporting Barisan Nasional.

"Why do we care about some Malay fanatics and risk losing support from the non-Malays? If we lose this, we would lose support from all."

Relating his personal experience in the 1969 general election, Dr Mahathir said he was then branded as a Malay chauvinist and this antagonised the non-Malays in his constituency Kota Star, resulting in him losing to Pas' Yusuf Rawa.