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Harakah to be asked to explain use of cartoons

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Home Ministry will ask Harakah, Pas' in-house organ, to explain its publication of two cartoons that allegedly insult Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Deputy Minister Datuk Chor Chee Heung said the use of the cartoons was being investigated and the ministry would send a letter to the Pas publication, asking why it had used them.

He said this in the Parliament lobby today in response to protests against the cartoon in the house yesterday.

Government MPs had objected to the two cartoons: one, depicting a khinzir or pig as the cause of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the second, showing Dr Mahathir with a snout and connecting him with the Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR) issue.

They said the cartoons were an affront to the country and Dr Mahathir.

"If not done with ill intention, I cannot imagine why they would have used these cartoons. It is a cruel act. We are all aware that the use of pigs in publications and pictures is a sensitive matter among Muslims.

"However, we will seek an explanation and then decide on what action to take against them (Harakah)," Chor said.