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Some 50pc of SAR teachers want to switch

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - More than 50 per cent of all 4,000 Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR) teachers have applied to teach in national schools, Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad said today.

"The number of applications has increased, although I can't give the exact figure right now. They are currently in the process of being absorbed. We started interviewing them and we will provide training to those who do not have it."

On what the Government was going to do with the SARs, Musa said that the Government did not have any specific plans for them and would allow them to be administered by the teachers who could still afford to do so.

So far, 15,000 students from SARs have applied to be transferred to Government schools, he told reporters in the Parliament lobby after attending the opening of the fifth session of the tenth Parliament by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin.

On Jan 16, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced that the Government would take in teachers of SARs. On Jan 22, the Education Ministry invited SAR teachers to teach in Government schools, promising them the same pay and benefits as teachers employed by the Ministry.

It is estimated that there are 4,000 teachers in the 43 primary and 225 secondary SAR nationwide.

Meanwhile, Opposition leader Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang, who is also Pas acting president and Terengganu Menteri Besar, said that the Barisan Nasional Government was trying to usurp the right of the Rulers to decide on the issue of the SARs.

Abdul Hadi also said Pas planned to hold a demonstration in front of the United States embassy on Friday to protest against the US threat against Iraq. He added the party and the Opposition front had recently made known their stand to the British High Commission.