KUALA LUMPUR: Umno Sabah again proposed the establishment of an Islamic Studies Faculty in Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) – the fourth time it has done so at the 69th Umno General Assembly here.

Datuk Mohd Arifin Mohd Arif, who is also Umno Kimanis Deputy Chief, hoped the authorities would consider setting up the proposed faculty as it could accommodate youths who are keen to pursue Islamic studies locally.

He also suggested that an Islamic Teaching College be set up in Sabah so as to provide proper and recognised teaching training for those teaching various Islamic studies.

"I have been calling for the setting up of an Islamic Studies Faculty in UMS for four times now.

"I believe there is a special need to create such faculty in the university as it would save cost and time for students who are interested to pursue Islamic studies and they do not have to go to overseas to acquire such academic qualifications," Arifin said.

He said this when debating Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak’s presidential address on religion and education at the annual party assembly here.

Arifin said he proposed the setting up of Islamic Teaching College as a preparation to meet the quota of 90 per cent of teachers who will be from Sabah and Sarawak in three years’ time as promised by Najib during the Malaysia Day celebrations on Sept 16, this year.

Arifin, who is also Assistant Minister to the Chief Minister in charge of Islamic affairs, said by having the Islamic Teaching College, Form Six leavers can apply to be admitted into the college to do a degree in teaching Islamic studies.

By having both proposed institutions, he said Islamic teachers have more choices as they could be trained properly in the college and could also later pursue their Islamic studies in UMS.

He also recommended that the National Umno Islamic Religion Bureau to be an advisor to the party president and Supreme Council members.

Arifin also called for Islamic religious officers to be trained in Al-Azhar University so that they could also impart knowledge and valuable experiences as well as guiding the students in their respective states.