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Megat-firearms

GOVT TO VERIFY FIREARM PERMITS NATIONWIDE

KUALA LUMPUR, April 15 (Bernama) -- The Home Ministry will verify the authenticity of firearm permits issued nationwide, Deputy Minister Datuk Megat Junid Megat Ayob said today.

He said the verification exercise, which would start soon, would cover the process of application, adherence to procedures and how approval was granted.

"There are cases of people who have firearm permits although their applications were rejected," he said.

There were also cases of applications made in Selangor but approval was given in Johor, he said, adding that the ministry would also check whether the permits had been falsified.

He was speaking to reporters at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang, near here, last night after seeing off Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who left for Europe enroute to Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia.

Megat Junid said the freeze on issuance of firearm permits announced by Dr Mahathir on Saturday would facilitate the verification drive.

"We don't want people who don't need firearms to have one," he said.

The freeze on firearm permits and the verification exercise followed the conviction of former national skeet shooting champion Vincent Teo for illegal sales of firearms to Sabah businessman Datuk Alfred Chin who is being detained in Taiwan for alleged arms smuggling.

Megat Junid said there was no deadline for the verification exercise as the ministry wanted to conduct a thorough check.

He also said the ministry had imposed a two-year freeze beginning Jan 1 this year for applications to set up security companies.

The freeze was to enable the ministry to scrutinise 180 existing security firms after reports that some of them employed underaged boys, ex-criminals and red identity card holders as security guards.

There were also cases of security firms being leased out to unauthorised people, he added. -- Bernama

In PETALING JAYA, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Ong Ka Ting said it was unnecessary to verify the firearm permits issued to Rela members and senior government officers.

"These people have always secured their permits through proper channels," he told reporters at the ground-breaking ceremony for the Kwan In temple's education hall project.

He was confident they would not create any problems. -- BERNAMA