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IGP warns against illegal assemblies (HL)

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PETALING JAYA, Thurs. - Police will come down hard on those who try to mount demonstrations or hold illegal assemblies which could threaten public order, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Noor said today.

He gave this warning in the wake of moves believed to be made by supporters of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to hold demonstrations again on Monday.

The supporters of Anwar, who was removed as Deputy Prime Minister on Sept 2 and subsequently sacked from Umno because of alleged moral misconduct, are believed to have also posted messages on the Internet stating their intention.

Abdul Rahim said: "We will come down hard on them. We have issued a directive that no assemblies can be held without permits.

"The people here understand that within the bounds of law, there should not be any illegal assemblies.

"Any public gathering of five or more people should have a police permit as required under the law or stern action will be taken against those involved."

Abdul Rahim was speaking to reporters after his visit to the Kelana Jaya police station this afternoon.

At a separate function later, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said police had the right to stop rallies and demonstrations which incite violence as they could lead to disastrous consequences.

Dr Mahathir, speaking at a Press conference after chairing the National Information Technology Council meeting at the Prime Minister's Department, said incitement of violence could not be allowed in a multi-racial country like Malaysia as it could lead to racial riots.

He said Anwar's supporters were aware that if they resorted to violence, the police would have to use force to stop them, although it would be to the delight of the foreign media.

The Prime Minister said Anwar's supporters were now using mosques and Islam as well as trying to incite the people to revolt with the aim of having riots like those seen recently in Jakarta.

Abdul Rahim said the arrests of Anwar and his supporters under the Internal Security Act were to prevent any untoward incident or unrest, and it was not politically motivated as claimed by some sections of the foreign media.

He said the arrests under the ISA were within the powers of the police.

Abdul Rahim said those detained under the Act would be freed if there was no evidence of their involvement in disrupting public order and peace in the city recently.

"We don't want to see what happened in Jakarta in May happening here. We want to avoid situations faced by our neighbour (Indonesia) where rioting, killing and raping happened ... we want to avoid this," he said.

Abdul Rahim said that, to some extent, the chemistry of people in Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta was quite alike.

"The blood groupings are the same, their thinking is the same, their emotions are the same. People in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur, to some extent, are similar.

"Even the smallest provocation, something that starts as a small issue, may turn sour. Do you want a repeat of Jakarta here?" he said.

"If it happens here, the foreign Press will have a field day reporting.

"They will be only too happy to report back and play it up. Do you want that to happen here?"

Earlier, Abdul Rahim criticised the foreign media for having overplayed the demonstrations by portraying them as massive rioting and unrest.

"What actually happened was spontaneous reaction to attempts made by these groups of supporters of Anwar to create chaos and unrest within Kuala Lumpur.

But the foreign media portrayed it as a massive unrest throughout the country.

"In this regard, I think the foreign journalists are still not satisfied and want much more than what happened in Jakarta to happen here.

"They keep harping that there has been massive unrest. They have repeated this on CNN, CNBC and other news agencies, including Bangkok-based The Nation and on the Internet."

(END)