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Abdullah-Immigrants

NO NEED FOR UNHCR CAMPS FOR ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS, SAYS ABDULLAH

SABAK BERNAM, March 27 (Bernama) -- There are no need for UNHCR camps for illegal Indonesian immigrants since they are not refugees, said Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today.

The Indonesian illegal immigrants came looking for works following severe economic crisis at home and made Malaysia their choice because of its proximity to Indonesia, he said.

Abdullah was commenting on call by Asian director of Human Right Watch Mike Jendrzeczyk that Malaysia the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to handle the deportation process of the illegal immigrants.

"Maybe they are not aware of what is happening here. Indonesia understands what is happening and in fact is cooperating with us in the deportation," he told reporters after opening the Sabah Bernam Umno delegates conference at Dewan Seri Bagan Nakhoda Omar, here.

Clashes at the Immigration Detention Depot in Semenyih yesterday left one policeman and eight illegal immigrants dead. It broke out as the authorities were preparing to deport the detainees.

"We have received nothing from Indonesia on the matter. They understand that it is not easy to manage the deportation of so many people," he said.

Abdullah said that what happened at Semenyih was sad and regrettable.

He said the meeting between Indonesia's vice-president B.J. Habibie and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tomorrow had no nothing to do with the riot.

Habibie had made plans much earlier to stop over in Malaysia on his way to attend the second Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem) in London, he said.

Abdullah said if Habibie wanted to raise the issue that would be up to him.

"But I don't know what he will discuss with the Prime Minister," he said.

Tomorrow's visit will be Habibie's first to Malaysia since taking office as President Suharto's number two earlier this month.

--BERNAMA

AZH ABG