

National security not at risk: PM

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Too early to rule out political motive, says Mahathir

IPOH, Mon: National security is not affected by yesterday's arms raids involving a large cache of firearms and ammunition, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

However, he fears that the stolen weapons might be sold to certain quarters in need of them.

Asked whether the incident is a prelude to something bigger, he said: "That I do not know, but it will certainly be a prelude to something of a similar size.

"What we are worried now is that these weapons might be sold to certain quarters who are in need of arms.

"Although it (motive) is not clear now, we are aware that these weapons command a good price in the market," he said after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting at Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri DiRaja Mohd Tajol Rosli Ghazali's official residence here yesterday.

Mahathir, however, said the government has not ruled out the possibility that the "seizure" was politically mo-

tivated.

He said the government cannot rule out any possibility now until clear proof as to the motive of the whole incident is obtained.

Mahathir also said the government has instructed the relevant authorities to tighten up security with regard to storage of weapons.

Some 15 armed men posing as senior military officers pulled rank on sentries at the 304 Infantry Brigade in Grik early yesterday and escaped with an assortment of weapons including rifles, grenade launchers and thousands of rounds of ammunition.

Mahathir said that in this particular case, the sentries might have been taken aback as the impostors were posing as high-ranking officers.

"The army has been instructed to take appropriate measures as the government views this matter seriously," he said.

The Prime Minister, however, expressed his confidence that the whole situation can be contained.