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Attitude towards arms regretful

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed regret over the attitude of some security personnel who were not careful about the firearms in their custody.

Despite repeated reminders, such situations still recurred, the Prime Minister said.

"I have a feeling many are not concerned although we have given them instructions to be careful with the weapons entrusted to them.

"(But) we still get reports of security personnel losing their weapons kept in the car just because no one was looking after them."

He said this after launching a Workers' Day gathering at Stadium Putra in Bukit Jalil.

There have been two reported cases of firearms being stolen from security personnel in the past month.

On Thursday, a fugitive, Mohd Hasnul Hashim, 36, who was detained by police and bundled into the back of a police car after an accident in Sungai Tua, Selayang, drove the vehicle off as he was not handcuffed.

A Heckler & Koch MP5 submachine gun and four loaded magazines belonging to the police were also in the car.

Hasnul used the weapon to rob a construction company supervisor of RM588 in Taman Seri Gombak. He then abandoned the car and escaped into a jungle.

On July 2, members of the Al-Ma'unah deviationist group staged an arms heist at two army camps in Perak.

On reports by the foreign media that the Government was using the arms heists to gain political mileage, Dr Mahathir said he could keep quiet if he wanted to.

"But, what would happen if the Government keeps quiet and such incidents keep occurring.

"I am only warning them ... we have been stressing the repercussions of waging a hate campaign. These are the results of such a campaign," he said.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the police force must overcome weaknesses and improve the training of its officers.

Abdullah, who is also Home Minister, said that police officers, especially those on the beat, must be ready for all eventualities. He said they must not forget to adhere to procedures at all times.

"Everytime they are sent out on duty, their supervisors must remind them," he told a Press conference after opening the annual general meeting of the Overseas Umno Clubs Alumni Association.

Describing Thursday's incident as "isolated", Abdullah said he hoped it would not recur.

Nevertheless, he praised the police for their quick action.

"What is important is that the police have reacted speedily and recovered the weapon quickly."

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