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Careful probe before any group is labelled deviant, says Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Careful investigations have to be carried out before any Islamic teaching could be declared deviant, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said the Government did not want to act in haste in making decisions that could be questioned, misinterpreted or disputed.

"It is not that easy for the authorities to make a ruling on any teaching although there are signs showing they have deviated or possess the tendency to deviate.

"It is important that proof be obtained first. That's why sometimes a longer time is needed," Abdullah told a Press conference after opening a regional seminar on mysticism organised by Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia.

He was earlier asked about efforts to curb deviationist teachings and the existence of many such groups in the country.

On what could be done to curb the menace, Abdullah said society had to be educated on its danger.

"If a deviationist group is identified, counselling should be given to those involved to allow them to return to the right path. It will also prevent others who have plans or shown interest from joining the group."

Abdullah hoped the seminar - the first on mysticism to be held in the region - would lead to greater co-operation and understanding on efforts to curb deviationist teachings among countries in the region.

Abdullah was also asked at the Press conference about Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat's statement that Umno was trying to discredit Pas when party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad revealed a book in which Prophet Muhammad was said to be the first leader of an Islamic party.

"Who wrote the book? It even carried a preface by Datuk Fadzil Noor (Pas president). Everything that is not right to Pas, it is putting the blame on us, saying it is our doing.

"Sometimes, when you have committed a wrong, admit it...this is also taught by the religion."

On whether the book, Islam Optimis Melangkah ke Alaf Baru - Mengapa Pilih Parti Islam, would be banned, Abdullah said the authorities have to study the matter carefully before coming to a decision.

On the kafir-mengkafir (labelling other Muslims as infidels) issue, Abdullah said it had yet to be overcome.

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