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Mahathir-Indonesia

M'SIA TO SEEK CLARIFICATION FROM JAKARTA ON DETENTION OF MALAYSIANS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 29 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia will seek clarification from the Indonesian government over the detention of four Malaysians for being allegedly involved in illegal logging at the Kalimantan border.

"We would like to know whether it is true or not...sometimes the border is not demarcated throughout and they may have inadvertently crossed over.

"I know that at our border for instance...the Thais grow rubber trees in Malaysia. Checks conducted show it is carried out on the Malaysian side...we do not detain them but provide compensation to ask them to leave," he told reporters after opening Universiti Tenaga Nasional (Uniten), here.

He was asked to comment on news reports on the detention of four Malaysians over allegations of illegal logging in Sematan, about one kilometre from the Indonesian-Malaysian border yesterday.

On May 18, two Malaysians were arrested over allegations of bringing in heavy machinery to Seluas, Bengkayang, across from the Malaysian border.

Dr Mahathir said that the government does not chase away the Thais found earning income from rubber cultivation in the Malaysian side because Malaysia is a good neighbour.

Commenting further on the detention of the Malaysians in Indonesia, he said: "We would like to know what they have done and who detained them. I am not saying anything against Indonesia and we do not want to break the law".

He said that if the four Malaysians were found to be on the Malaysian side, then they should be released.

Asked to comment on the demands of the Abu Sayyaf group which is holding 20 hostages including eight Malaysians in Jolo, Dr Mahathir said that the Malaysian government does not know what the group is demanding.

"But I am not leaving any options closed...we must look at the options," he added.

Gunmen kidnapped 21 people from the dive resort of Sipadan on April 23. The group released one of the nine Malaysians held, Zulkarnian Hashim, last Saturday.

-- BERNAMA

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