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Fugitive threatens anti-KL demo

Abdul Razak Ahmad in Jogjakarta, Java

ONE of the five men wanted by Malaysian police over their involvement in the Kumpulan Militan Malaysia said yesterday he would organise a demonstration outside the Malaysian embassy in Jakarta soon.

Abdus Samad Abud @ Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, leader of the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) said the demonstration was to protest the arrest and to call for the release of his friend Muhammad Iqbal Abu Jibril, who he said was innocent.

Muhammad Iqbal was among those detained under the Internal Security Act for his alleged involvement in the KMM and the attempted Southern Bank robbery in Petaling Jaya on May 18.

Abu Bakar said in an interview he fully supported the KMM for pursuing "Islamic goals" in Malaysia, although he was not a member of the movement.

He said he suspected the arrest of certain individuals by the Malaysian authorities to be politically motivated to discredit pro-Islamic groups in Malaysia.

Abu Bakar said that the KMM posed no threat to the Government.

He admitted he knew Nik Adli Nik Abdul Aziz and Muhammad Iqbal.

Also present during the interview was Muhammad Iqbal's elder brother Irfan Suryahardi Awwas, a senior leader of the MMI.

Irfan acknowledged that his brother was involved in the on-going regional conflict in Ambon between Muslims and Christians but said he was not involved in criminal activities in Malaysia.

Irfan said the MMI had submitted a letter addressed to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad stating Iqbal's innocence.

The letter was delivered to the Malaysian embassy in Jakarta.

Asked on the gun-running racket reportedly uncovered by the Malaysian police in its on-going investigations into the KMM, Abu Bakar said he was not aware of any such activities.

"However, if those arms are being smuggled for use in the Ambon conflict then I think it is most appropriate in order to retaliate against the Christians."

Abu Bakar said he was willing to meet with Malaysian police officials to give a statement, but only if they came to Indonesia.

He said he obtained a Malaysian permanent resident status two years after he travelled to Malaysia in 1985.

He sought refuge in Malaysia as Jakarta was cracking down on Islamic groups in the country at the time.