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Abdullah-Anthrax

GOVT LOOKING INTO WAYS TO NAB ANTHRAX PRANKSTERS

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 23 (Bernama) -- The government will look at ways to nab pranksters behind the Anthrax scare, which had become rampant of late in the country, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

"We have to think of some ways to ensure that these pranksters, if they are such, will not repeat what they are doing... there must be a way, I don't know how but I will ask the police and see..." he said.

He said if persuasion and advice were not good enough for these pranksters then the authorities would have to find some other way to stop them from disrupting the lives of innocent people.

"Everybody is scared of it, its just more than a joke, this is very, very serious," he told reporters after delivering a keynote address at the Government Agencies Corporatisation seminar at the Crown Princess Hotel here.

Asked if the scare could be a way of sabotaging the country economically, he said anyone could build a theory on the spate of recent incidents.

"I would like to have a discussion with the police and find out what we can do to stop anyone who tries to take advantage by purposely creating a scare in order to sabotage or make life hell for certain people," he said.

However, Abdullah, who is also the Home Minister declined comment when asked if the Internal Security Act would be used against these pranksters.

"I don't want to say anything yet but we will discuss this issue at the National Security Council meeting," he added.

On another matter, Abdullah said the meeting between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and U.S.President George W.Bush at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in China last week would create better understanding between the two countries.

"This is a good and important meeting.....it was a success....I believe this will create understanding between the two leaders and the two countries on various issues which had arisen due to misunderstandings," he said.

He said Malaysia was seen as being against the US when in fact the country was not going against the superpower.

"We are not looking for a fight but only saying what is true," he added.

He said this was the style of Dr Mahathir in speaking his mind and what he said was not just his own views but the views of Cabinet members as these issues were discussed at weekly Cabinet meetings.

Abdullah said Malaysia's views needed to be understood by the US but when it came to violence "we only have one stand -- we are against all acts of violence."

He said when Iraq invaded Kuwait, Malaysia was against this act of violence and was regarded as a friend of the US but after Iraq withdrew from Kuwait and sanctions were imposed on that country, Malaysia objected to the move.

Malaysia's stand on various issues were consistent especially in rejecting violence and that was why the Malaysian Government did not support US airstrikes on Afghanistan.

-- BERNAMA

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