

22/10/2002

Check with Kuala Lumpur first, Abdullah tells foreign governments

Chok Suat Ling

CYBERJAYA, Mon. - Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today called on foreign governments to consult the Malaysian Government before advising their people against visiting or holding events here.

Expressing regret over Australia's postponement of two major events here, the Deputy Prime Minister said if clarifications were sought from the Malaysian Government, they would have known that it was safe here.

"We have been telling people this all the time ... it is safe, we have taken precautions, the police are vigilant. Those intending to invest here or have programmes here should have no fear.

"They (foreign governments) should seek clarification from us on the security situation in the country before issuing travel advisories to their people. If they do so, they will be sure that we are safe."

Speaking to reporters after leading a group of ministers on a tour of the Multimedia Super Corridor flagship centre and Centre for Health Innovation and Medical Enterprises, Abdullah admitted the possibility that some countries might follow Australia's lead, but added it would not happen if clarification was sought.

The Australian High Commission yesterday postponed two events after its government received information on generic threats in the region in the wake of the Oct 12 bombings in Bali.

The Study in Australia Education Exhibition from Oct 25 to 27 and Film Festival from Oct 23 to 27 have been postponed indefinitely, acting Australian High Commissioner Nicholas Brown said in a statement.

The recently revised travel advisory to Malaysia urges Australians to avoid large public gatherings and exercise caution here.

Abdullah said while it was Australia's prerogative to postpone the events, it was regrettable.

On the book Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror, written by Sri Lankan author Rohan Gunaratna, Abdullah said the Home Ministry had been directed to study it and recommend "the best action".

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, on his arrival at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang from his overseas trip, said that people like Gunaratna "spoil everything and was stupid and did not know anything".

"They simply write anything to get a pat on the back from the Westerners. Asians would even sell their country to get a pat on their back.

People like them are apple polishers. They don't respect others."

On Gunaratna's assertion that his writings were based on information from sources in the Philippines, Dr Mahathir said: "Tell us the source.

"We also want to know.

"Not necessarily whatever is said by the Philippines was right.

"We hear all sorts of stories even in Malaysia. Stories like I have become a Firaun (Pharaoh)."