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Mahathir-Militants

MALAYSIA WAY AHEAD IN DEALING WITH TERROR THREAT, SAYS PM

PUTRAJAYA, Nov 28 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia is way ahead of the rest of the world in terms of dealing with potential terrorists.

The Prime Minister said as such there was nothing to be feared here.

"We knew about it (militant activities) very much earlier, long before Sept 11. We have already taken action," he said when asked by reporters on the recent arrest of suspected members of a suicide squad in Johor.

Dr Mahathir also said that at the moment the government was looking at religious schools because they were not teaching religion but something else.

He was speaking to reporters after witnessing the certification for the mass production of the Inokom Atos, a multi-function vehicle produced by Inokom Corporation Sdn Bhd (Inokom) and Hyundai Motor Corporation, South Korea.

On the arrest of the suspected militants, Dr Mahathir said that the government had always made their presence known.

Asked why it was a cause of concern, he said: "It would be a cause of concern if we do not know where they are, but we know where they all are."

He said the existence of this group of people was because they were misguided people who believed they could not gain power through democracy in this country.

He said these people went to Pakistan and Afghanistan to learn to use force to take over the government.

"They came back but they are not well prepared for this kind of thing. So, they are not actually a threat to this country and they soon can be detected," he said.

Asked whether Malaysia would ban ammonium nitrate, which is used to make explosives, he said the government could keep track on the stock of fertilisers with this material.

Asked whether he was surprised that this group was found in the country, Dr Mahathir said he was not.

"Once we discovered very much earlier that there are such people, we know from the information that we got there must be a number of them around."

Dr Mahathir was also asked on the case of two MCA members who abstained from voting against a DAP motion in the Penang State Assembly recently.

Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, said it was up to the MCA to make a decision.

"(A) decision that they (MCA) can make is to drop these two, but if they would like to see BN make a decision, we will be prepared to study the case," he said.

The two BN representatives -- Tan Cheng Liang (Jawi) and Lim Boo Chang (Datuk Keramat) -- had abstained when a vote was taken on the motion seeking to defer the RM1.02 billion Penang Outer Ring Road (PORR) project.

-- BERNAMA

HS CS YBY