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Abdullah-Rape

NO DECISION YET ON DEATH PENALTY FOR CHILD RAPISTS

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 18 (Bernama) -- The Cabinet has not made any decision yet on the proposal to impose the death sentence on child rapists, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

"This matter concerns the law. Datuk (Seri Dr) Rais Yatim (Minister in the Prime Minister's Department) is still on leave...he will bring it to the Cabinet," he said.

Abdullah said there was still time for "us to think and give views" on the matter.

The government had received many letters from the people saying that the death penalty would be too stiff for child rapists, he said.

He was speaking to reporters after attending the Home Ministry's Hari Raya reception at the ministry here. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the majority of the Cabinet members also attended the gathering.

"There are views that if this penalty is imposed, we will not get the needed information or cooperation from the victim, especially if the accused is a member and the bread winner of the family," said Abdullah, who is also the Home Minister.

He said if this view was considered, the government "might have to think of other penalties that need to be imposed on those convicted of this offence."

"There are other aspects of this case that need to be studied further before we decide on it," he said.

Asked on the arrest of two people yesterday for circulating rumours of bomb attacks on the Internet, he said the action was taken according to the normal provisions of the Internal Security Act (ISA).

"We are now facing all sorts of challenges and pressures, and (when) there are views, assumptions that our country will be in chaos, all these need to be considered (investigated)," he said.

"And the action taken must be related to the interests of the country and the people, and not the political interests of any party," he said.

Two workers of a private company -- a 40-year-old man and a 22-year-old woman -- were arrested by Kuala Lumpur police yesterday for allegedly sending out e-mails saying that bomb attacks would be launched in several places in the city.

Following a report lodged by the Australian High Commission, the two were arrested under Section 28 of the ISA for allegedly posting false information which could create public unrest.

-- BERNAMA

SR AZH YBY