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Security situation in order (HL)

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PUTRAJAYA, Wed. - The security situation in the country is under control, contrary to rumours on the Internet of impending terrorist attacks in Kuala Lumpur, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

As the police arrested a third person under the Internal Security Act for spreading the rumours, the Deputy Prime Minister said "everything was calm and in order".

Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai said more arrests were expected outside the city.

Abdullah said the country might be facing many challenges and pressures but "we are handling them well".

"We cannot allow rumours to sidetrack or negatively affect us," he said at his office today.

The authorities will act if the situation warrants it to maintain peace and order in the country.

"The safety of the country and the people is always given importance," he said.

Earlier, speaking to reporters after hosting the Home Ministry's Hari Raya open house here, Abdullah said the arrest of the two people under the Internal Security Act yesterday for allegedly circulating rumours of pre-planned bombings in various public areas in the city, including the Kuala Lumpur City Centre, was a pre-emptive move.

This was to ensure that the rumours would not create chaos in the country.

He said they were arrested under normal provisions of the ISA.

"The country is now facing all kinds of pressure and challenges. We do not want a situation which could create chaos.

"There are already assumptions and wrong perceptions that there was turmoil in the country. We have to take the necessary action for the sake of peace and order in the country and for the people."

He said there was no political benefit accruing from the arrests.

Among those who attended the open house were Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and Ministers.

Meanwhile, Norian said a 35-year-old woman was picked up in Petaling Jaya yesterday after a 40-year-old man and a 22-year-old woman were arrested here earlier in the day.

"It is still too earlier to say if those arrested have any connections with any particular terrorist groups. However, investigations are being carried out.

"Those distributing the e-mail have to take responsibility for it as it is an offence under the ISA. It can cause anxiety and uneasiness among the people," he said after the open house.

On the origins of the e-mail, Norian said various possibilities were being investigated, including overseas sources.