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Terror suspect to be deported (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - American terror suspect Ahmed Ibrahim Bilal will be deported to the United States soon as the country has revoked his passport and issued a warrant of arrest for him.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Ahmed would have to be sent back as he did not have a valid travel document.

The Home Minister said this was despite the fact that Malaysia did not have an extradition agreement with the US.

"I have been made to understand that the US government had revoked his passport so at the moment he is without a valid travel document.

"As they have revoked his passport, we will have to deport him ... the Immigration Department will have to deal with that," Abdullah said, adding that although the International Islamic University student was yet to be detained, the authorities were confident of apprehending him as soon as they knew his whereabouts.

The New Straits Times today reported that Ahmed, sought by the US on charges of conspiring to wage war against his country and supporting the al-Qaeda network, had gone into hiding.

Abdullah was speaking at a Press conference after opening the 18th EAROPH World Planning Congress today.

Asked if Malaysia was in a awkward position in terms of the arrest and deportation of Ahmed, Abdullah said it was a straightforward case.

"He (Ahmed) has not breached any law in this country. We received him (as with any other visitor) in good faith and we also had no problem with him wanting to continue his studies at the International Islamic University.

"But since his own government has revoked his documents, his status in Malaysia has changed. So we will have to act accordingly," Abdullah said.

Ahmed was last seen at the university campus on Saturday, just before Federal Bureau of Investigation officers arrested four Americans allegedly linked to a terrorist cell network in the states of Oregon and Michigan on Friday (Saturday, Malaysian time).

Meanwhile, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia would carry out its own investigations to determine if Ahmed was a terrorist as claimed by the US.

"Of course, we will find out whether this is true or not," he told a Press conference after opening the 18th Commonwealth Auditors-General Conference at a hotel here.

He said this when asked whether an investigation would be conducted to verify the US' claims.

Dr Mahathir said the matter had been referred to the Immigration Department as Malaysia did not have an extradition treaty with the US.

"If we want to surrender someone to the US, we have to know whether the person is guilty or not and what are the rights of the Americans in demanding an extradition.

"We have to study all these carefully. We do things based on the laws."

The Prime Minister, however, lamented that some parties did not have any respect for the law.

"When it serves their interests, they do not adhere to the law. But when others are guilty, they want to abide by the law."

Drawing a parallel to a case involving an Italian in Malaysia wanted by another country, Dr Mahathir said the matter was taken to court to

determine whether there was a case to extradite the person.

On whether the Government would request that the US provide details to support its contention that Ahmed was a terrorist, Dr Mahathir said the Attorney-General was studying the legal obligations.

On whether admission into IIU would be tightened following the latest developments, he said there was no need for that.

"Whoever is eligible, we will accept. We are not going to check their shoes," he said. (Abdullah, in a recent visit to the US, was asked by security to remove his belt and shoes at the Los Angeles airport enroute to New York).

To a suggestion that there was a concerted effort by some parties to paint Malaysia as home to terrorist networks, Dr Mahathir replied: "I do not want to make any accusation against any country or person. It is up to the people to assess for themselves whether Malaysia is a base for terrorists."

On whether the report on Ahmed would reinforce the perception that terrorists had made Malaysia their safe haven, the Prime Minister said although such news reports were not doing justice to Malaysia, there was nothing the Government could do.

In Kota Kinabalu, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai said the warrant of arrest contained details of the charges against Ahmed.

It provided information as well as proof of his alleged involvement in a conspiracy to wage war against his country and supporting the al-Qaeda network.

The warrant also contained a note saying that the US Government had revoked the passport it had issued to Ahmed, Norian said.

"As his (Ahmed) passport has been revoked, he can no longer be allowed to stay in the country," Norian told reporters after visiting the State police contingent headquarters.

He said police would hand him over to the US government through its representative in Kuala Lumpur.