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Mahathir-Hadi

GOVT WILL PROBE HADI AWANG'S PRESENCE AT MAKASSAR MEETING

LANGKAWI, Feb 8 (Bernama) -- The Government will investigate a news report which claimed that Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang attended a meeting of radical Islamic groups in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, in October 2000.

The Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, said a probe would be undertaken when asked for his response to the call by Umno Youth to investigate the report considering that the Chairman of the Mujahiddin Council of Indonesia, Abu Bakar Basyir also attended the meeting.

Umno Youth head Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein was quoted in the report as saying that the matter should be investigated and clarified failing which the good name of Muslims in Malaysia and the country would be tarnished.

Apart from Abu Bakar, the news report said the meeting was also attended by the head of "Laskar Jundullah", Agus Dwikarna, who is now serving a 17-year jail term for being in possession of explosives and being involved in bombing incidents in Manila and Jakarta.

"We do not know...I hope he is not involved in criminal activities committed by a number of people out there," he said.

Hadi Awang had since said that he went to Makassar in his capacity as head of the Terengganu Government following an invitation by the Hassanuddin University and several non-governmental organisations in Sulawesi which is a nest for Islamic militants in this region.

According to the reports Hadi said he went to Makassar to attend an Islamic Congress and was not worried about attempts to link him to terrorism.

Asked if there was any exemption given to Menteris Besar in matters such as this when compared to others involved in militant activities, Dr Mahathir said in sarcasm, "He is in the opposition. The opposition has privileges. Even if he breaks the law it does not matter because he is in the opposition. Others must be taken to court even over a small matter."

On whether Hadi's presence at the Makassar meeting implied that PAS was involved in militant activities, the Prime Minister said, "We know that many members of the militant movements are also PAS members."

Dr Mahathir who arrived here last night left this morning by helicopter for Kuala Kedah, accompanied by Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain.

After inspecting the Kuala Kedah Marina Harbour project, Dr Mahathir returned to Langkawi and toured the "Harbour Park Langkawi" at Pantai Kok here.

The RM40 million Mediterranean-like project will have a marina which can house 100 yachts at any one time.

Other facilities at the 12-hectare site include a hotel, boutiques and apartments.

The Prime Minister was briefed on the project which was now 80 per cent complete by its consultant, national mariner Datuk Azhar Mansor.

Dr Mahathir then visited the cable car station. The cable car links Oriental Village, a shopping complex, at Teluk Burau to the 708-metre high Gunung Machinchang.

He was also briefed on the proposal to have a suspension bridge between two hills in the area by project consultant Dr Peter Wyss.

-- BERNAMA

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