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Abdullah-Students

STUDENTS ARRESTED UNDER ISA TO HELP IN INVESTIGATIONS

PUTRAJAYA, Nov 11 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today that the arrest of 13 Malaysian students under the Internal Security Act (ISA) upon their return from Pakistan was to facilitate investigations into their alleged involvement in the activities of the Jemaah Islamiah (JI).

The prime minister said that based on information received from certain agencies in Pakistan, the students were alleged to be involved in the activities of the militant group and even to have connections with certain people in the group.

"Understanding that they may be JI cadres who are to be given training in Pakistan and to continue with the activities of the JI today, it is important security-wise to investigate the extent of their involvement," he said.

Abdullah, who has taken over as finance minister from Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, said this at a news conference on the first day he stepped foot in his office at the Finance Ministry Complex here.

According to press reports, the Malaysians, who were former students of two universities in Karachi, were deported after being detained by the Pakistani authorities on Sept 20 on suspicion of involvement in militant activities.

Inspector-General of Police Datuk Seri Mohamed Bakri Omar said in a statement yesterday that the students were arrested under the ISA upon their arrival at the KL International Airport (KLIA) on suspicion of having links with the JI, which threatened national security.

Abdullah, who is also home minister, gave an assurance that the students would be released if investigations showed that they were not involved.

"If there's nothing, there's no reason for us to hold them under the ISA," he said, adding that if that was the case, they could continue with their studies.

He said that some non-governmental organisations or the parents and relatives of the students were bound to question their arrest under the ISA.

Advising the parents to be patient, he said: "I hope they will understand that we arrested them under the ISA to carry out investigations."

He said that not all of the students concerned were young people.

To a question, he said the government asked for them to be sent home after learning about their arrest in Pakistan because they were Malaysian citizens.

He said the students were seen with certain groups and that was why they were forbidden to remain in Pakistan.

-- BERNAMA

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