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Abdullah refutes reports of threats in US

Nik Imran Abdullah

KAJANG, Thurs. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today disputed a report that Malaysian missions in the United States had received threats of reprisals over recent comments by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad regarding the Jews.

He did not know the basis for the report, which also stated that a Washington-based Malaysian diplomat had flown back to Kuala Lumpur last weekend as a "precautionary measure" after the embassy there received threats over the phone.

"There is no reason to recall (the embassy staff). Why should we?" he said when asked whether Malaysia would recall diplomats in the US over the alleged threats.

The Associated Press report had also stated that Malaysian diplomatic missions in the US had increased security after receiving threats of reprisals over Dr Mahathir's recent comments that Jews ruled the world.

Abdullah said he would have been informed by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar if Malaysian diplomatic missions had really come under threat.

"It is not possible that Wisma Putra would not know about the fate of its staff in the US," he said, adding that he would not order any action merely on the basis of a Press report.

He said the Government had always ensured the safety and security of embassy staff as this was its responsibility.

On the call by US-based Jewish lobby group, the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, for a boycott of tourism and investment in Malaysia, Abdullah said he was confident that investors would continue to come to the country on the basis of its safety, security and good economy.

"I know that investors come because they want to make profits from investments in a country which is peaceful and safe," he said.

"We do not have to be worried with their stand. They have the freedom (to take such a stand) but we are disappointed it was taken in such a way."

He said the group's call for a boycott was inappropriate as Dr Mahathir's statement on Jews had been taken out of context.

In its report, the AP had stated that the centre had condemned Dr Mahathir as a "serial anti-Semite" and called for a boycott of the country.

The centre had launched a scathing attack on Dr Mahathir after he branded Jews "arrogant" and accused them of controlling the world by proxy.

The centre had called on investors and tourists to avoid Malaysia until it became clear that the leaders who would follow Dr Mahathir after he retired did not share his views.

Abdullah had earlier closed a seminar on Islam hadari (which propagates excellence as a way of life) at the Universiti Tenaga Nasional.

Also present were Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakub, religious adviser to the Prime Minister Tan Sri Dr Abdul Hamid Othman, Tenaga Nasional chairman Datuk Awang Adek Hussin, Information Ministry Special Affairs Department director-general Datuk Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir and DRB-Hicom Bhd group chairman Tan Sri Mohd Salleh Sulong. The seminar was jointly organised by Abdul Hamid's office, the Special Affairs Department and DRB-Hicom.

