

25/04/2003

Acting PM: Police keen to interview three Malaysians arrested by Indons

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Police are keen to interview the three Malaysians who were among 18 arrested by Indonesian authorities as suspected terrorists linked to Jemaah Islamiyah, acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said the police might send a team to Jakarta for the purpose after more information on their activities were obtained.

"When we receive the full report and obtain more information, perhaps we can interview the Malaysians if permission is given by the Indonesian police."

Speaking after launching the TPM Academy in Bukit Jalil, Abdullah, who is Home Minister, said he did not expect much problem as Malaysian police had close co-operation with their counterparts in Jakarta.

On the involvement of Malaysians in terrorist activities in Indonesia, the acting Prime Minister said the Government could not object to their arrest if offences had been committed.

Asked whether the Malaysians were linked to the Bali bomb blasts, Abdullah said: "May be ... investigations will be able to ascertain this."

Abdullah was also asked on reports that the banned Al-Arqam movement had been revived, to which he replied the Government was aware of the matter.

"We are aware of the activities and latest developments taking place. The Islamic Affairs Development Department will act accordingly."

Abdullah said the Government's stand on Al-Arqam was known, hence if there were signs that the movement was being revived, the authorities would step in.

Asked whether the Internal Security Act would be invoked against those behind efforts to revive the movement, Abdullah said there was no such plans yet.

Abdullah, who is acting Finance Minister, was also asked on the economic stimulus package to assist industries and sectors hit by the invasion of Iraq and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.

He said the draft was ready but some additional input needed to be incorporated following recent dialogues between the Government and corporate leaders and manufacturers.

Abdullah said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is now on two-month leave, would announce the package.

To a question on the possibility of major projects being deferred because of the sluggish economy, he said: "That's only a probability ... we will see."

On whether the package would be as big as the US\$1.5 billion (RM5.7 billion) aid announced by Hong Kong yesterday, Abdullah advised everyone to be patient.

On the 4.5 per cent dividend announced by the Employees Provident Fund and plans by the Malaysian Trades Union Congress to picket, the acting Prime Minister said the matter had been explained many times.

"We are lucky to still be able to get dividend. The fund has explained to MTUC, which is also represented on the EPF board (which recommended the quantum)."

On whether there was a need to hold a by-election for the Lintang state seat in Perak following the death of its assemblyman on Sunday, Abdullah said there was no need to do so.

"If there is no need, then we do not have to hold it," he said,

referring to the provision that no by-election was needed to fill up seats which fell vacant less than two years before the end of the term of Parliament and State legislative assemblies.

On the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia's report on the ISA, Abdullah said the Government was studying the recommendations.