

'Ringgit notes don't make rebels Malaysians'

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THE Malaysian currency found on suspected Thai insurgents arrested in Narathiwat on Wednesday does not mean they are Malaysian citizens, said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The prime minister said it also did not prove that those detained were trained in Malaysia or had made plans in Malaysia to cause violence in Thailand's southern region.

"They could be Thai nationals. It is only that they had Malaysian currency with them when they were arrested. Maybe they wanted to enter Malaysia.

"However, without any other solid evidence, I deny that those

people (arrested) were Malaysians or that they were trained in Malaysia," he told Malaysian journalists here yesterday.

The prime minister was here to attend the Arab League Summit in his capacity as Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) chairman. After the Press conference, he left for Mecca for his *umrah* (minor pilgrimage) before returning to Kuala Lumpur.

Abdullah was asked to comment on a report that Thai authorities had seized weapons and bomb-making components, as well as ringgit and baht worth about RM100,000, from 11 sus-

pected insurgents.

The report quoted Thai army chief Gen Sondhi Boonyaratkalin as saying that the Malaysian currency found on the suspects indicated that some of the culprits were planning to flee to Malaysia after launching attacks in the southern provinces.

On why it was easy for Thais to enter Malaysia, Abdullah said they could have entered the country legally, especially those with dual nationalities.

He explained that Malaysia and Thailand were in the process of verifying the list of those having dual nationalities to check on suspected insurgents.

On why some quarters in Thailand were always pointing fingers at Malaysia in connection with the insurgency, the prime minister said such allegations were common. They were, however, always investigated and none so far had been found to be true.

In Kuala Lumpur, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Musa Hassan said no request for assistance in investigating the arrested suspects had been received from Thailand.

He dismissed the notion that the arrests supported the theory that the southern Thai insurgents were obtaining funding in Malaysia.