

NEW STRAITS TIMES

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Cops applauded for quick action

KUALA LUMPUR: The police were yesterday praised for their swift action in nabbing the eight suspects linked to the arson incident at the Metro Tabernacle Church.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, however, urged police to quickly wrap up investigations against the eight so that they could be charged as soon as possible.

He also instructed the force to continue investigations into similar incidents reported at mosques and other places of worship.

"I hope the arrests have shown the public the effort and commitment put in by the police in solving the case," he said in a statement.

"Police will continue investigations to identify the culprits involved in the other incidents as well."

He added that police were on top of the issue as it touched on the religious sentiments of a multicultural society.

"We are aware of the neg-



ative impact of this issue on the people and the country, if not handled with care," he said, adding that political figures should exercise extreme caution when making comments or issuing statements on the matter.

Eight men, among them two brothers and their uncle, were arrested between Tuesday and early Wednesday for their

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alleged involvement in the arson at the Metro Tabernacle Church in Desa Melawati, Wangsa Maju, on Jan 8.

The administrative section on the ground floor of the church building was destroyed in the blaze.

The incident was believed to be linked to a High Court ruling on Dec 31 allowing the Catholics to use the word "Al-

lah" in the Bahasa Malaysia section of the *Herald*, their weekly publication.

One of the suspects, a 25-year-old man who sustained burns to his chest and left hand, has been re-admitted to Kuala Lumpur Hospital for further treatment.

He was taken to the hospital under heavy police guard yesterday morning after police had obtained a seven-day remand order against the eight on Wednesday.

It was learnt that the suspect had tried to treat the wounds by himself for more than 10 days after the incident and only sought treatment at the hospital on Monday after his wounds got infected.

He told doctors he sustained the injuries while burning rubbish with petrol.

The authorities informed police who nabbed him on Tuesday.

Following his arrest, police rounded up seven others, all from the Ampang area.