

NEW STRAITS TIMES

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'Surau arsonists just seeking publicity'

PUTRAJAYA: The four men arrested in connection with the arson attempts at two surau in Muar were "simply seeking public attention".

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said Deputy Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Ismail Omar had told him the four had acted on their own.

"Based on police findings, the arson attempts can be construed as an unscrupulous act by irresponsible young men who were seeking public attention," he said in a statement yesterday.

Hishammuddin lauded police for their efficient, thorough and fair investigation on the incident, which led to the arrest of four men, including the son of a policeman.

The culprits, aged between 16 and 28, were detained at separate locations within 48 hours of the arson attempts on

the surau in Jalan Ismail Omar and Jalan Salleh on Thursday.

Hishammuddin urged the police to beef up security in those areas to ensure nothing untoward recurred.

He added that police should meet local community watch groups to forge closer ties and curb crime.

Meanwhile, Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat had directed his political secretary, Simon Lim, to assess the situation after the arson attempts at the two surau, out of concern over the incident.

The report made by Lim to his boss showed that the situation in the district was calm, with residents of all races supporting the government's efforts to weed out any element which could undermine unity.

Lim said the Bakri MCA division had pledged to support its president on any action

plan to improve race relations.

He added that he would propose to Ong that the party president provide an allocation to repair the two damaged surau.

He commended the police for their quick action in nabbing four suspects within 48 hours.

Accompanied by division chairman Sia Kia Tuan and committee members, Lim held talks with the surau committee and local community leaders in Jalan Ismail and later in Park Beting yesterday.

Surau Siratul Rahim Jalan Ismail committee chairman Sehat Atan said the initial tense situation arising from the arson attempts had returned to normal following the arrest of the four suspects.

He thanked all those who gave donations to repair the surau.