

POTA Not Same As ISA - Muhyiddin

Bernama

April 8, 2015

By Azeman Ariffin

JAKARTA, April 8 (Bernama) -- Deputy prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the government had proposed the POTA because there was a need for a specific law to check against terrorist activities in the country, in fact, lately there were Malaysian nationals who were involved with such activities abroad.

He said the new act gives executive power to the Terrorism Prevention Board, whose members are appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, and those detained can meet their next-of-kin and seek the services of lawyers chosen by them.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), which was recently passed in Parliament, does not empower the minister to enforce it and the government has given an assurance that it will not interfere with political power.

He said, POTA is not the same as the Internal Security Act which has been abolished.

"There are people claiming that POTA is purportedly 'ISA 2' and this allegation is not true because it is specifically to tackle problems concerning terrorism," Muhyiddin said during a question and answer session at the meeting with Malaysian nationals, in Jakarta, Tuesday night.

The POTA Bill was passed at 2.30 am Tuesday following a 12-hour debate due to the misinterpretation by the opposition who had the misperception that it was similar to the ISA.

Muhyiddin regretted the various allegations hurled against the government on the efforts to implement the Goods and Services Tax (GST) including that it is purportedly aimed at settling government debts.

He said the GST is not to settle government debts, on the other hand, it aims to increase the national taxation system and, in fact, Malaysia is the 161st country in the world to implement the tax.

The deputy prime minister said the GST aims to improve weaknesses in the previous taxation system and overcome leakages because there were groups who taxed the consumers but did not pay the tax to the government.

"We give some time to stabilise prices after the implementation of the GST and we are prepared to receive any complaint from the people through the Ministry of Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism as well as the Customs Department," he said.

Earlier in his speech, Muhyiddin said there is still much room for improvement in bilateral

ties between Malaysia and Indonesia.

He said although his visit to Indonesia is brief, he would discuss numerous matters concerning the economy, education and socio-culture between the two countries.

Muhyiddin said the value of trade between Malaysia and Indonesia amounted to USD20.61 billion (RM75 billion) in 2014 which was a reduction compared to 2013 where the value was USD23.98 billion (RM87 billion).

"Malaysia is the third largest investing country in Indonesia and we will endeavour to increase the investment," he said.

In the field of education, he said, Malaysia plans to be the educational hub for Asia and will provide more room for foreign students to enter Malaysian institutions of higher learning with the target of 200,000 foreign students.

In addition, Muhyiddin said, there are suggestions to make the Malay language and the Indonesian language as the lingua franca at the international stage and this will be followed up by a joint committee between both countries.

The deputy prime minister arrived in Jakarta Tuesday for a three-day working visit and he is scheduled to meet with Indonesian vice-president Jusuf Kalla, Wednesday.

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