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PM to contact King Abdullah over Haj quota

PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak will be contacting Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah soon to discuss the position of Haj quota for Malaysian pilgrims, which is under threat following the Bersih 3.0 demonstrations in Mecca and Medina on April 26.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom said the issue needed to be resolved fast to avoid any problems, especially at the last minute.

"If Saudi Arabia takes action following the Bersih demonstrations, there will be problems as all preparations for this year's Malaysian Haj pilgrims such as chartering of aircraft, booking of hotel ac-

commodation and appointing companies to provide food for the pilgrims have been done."

He said this after opening the 8th Muzakarah of the Syariah Advisory Council for Financial Institutions in Malaysia at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre, here, yesterday.

Also present was director-general of the Malaysia Islamic Development Department (Jakim), Datuk Othman Musthapa.

Saudi Arabia had sent a diplomatic note to Wisma Putra, expressing disappointment over the holding of illegal gatherings by two groups of Malaysians in the holy cities.

The issue of Haj quota for

Malaysia arose when Saudi Arabia was considering whether to limit the quota or to suspend the entry of Haj and Umrah pilgrims from Malaysia following the demonstrations.

Jamil Khir said although the Saudi Arabian government had not made a decision on this, it did ask for explanation on the illegal gatherings.

"People in Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen have bigger problems than what we have in our country, so why must a number of Malaysians resort to holding demonstrations in Mecca and Medina?"

He said Tabung Haji had also sent a letter to Saudi

Arabia's Haj and Wakaf Minister to explain the illegal gathering issue.

On the muzakarah (discussion), Jamil Khir said it focused on investing in gold as a productive investment which was receiving good response nowadays.

"We can see the trend of increasing price of gold, reaching 250 per cent over the last five years, indicating gold as an important investment commodity.

"However, Muslims need to know the syariah guidelines in carrying out sale and purchase of gold," he said, adding that the outcome of the muzakarah would be a useful guide for those investing in gold. - Bernama