

MAHATHIR-VIETNAMESE 2 KOTA KINABALU 2

KOTA KINABALU, JAN. 24 (BERNAMA)—DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY REVEALED THAT A GROUP CALLING ITSELF +THE WORLD VISION+ IS HELPING VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE TO COME TO MALAYSIA.

THIS GROUP MET WITH REFUGEES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA PROVIDING THEM WITH MAPS, COMPASSES AND OTHER NAVIGATIONAL AIDS AND DIRECTED THEM TOWARDS THE MALAYSIAN COAST.

HE TOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE HERE THAT IN VIEW OF THIS, THE GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED NOT TO ALLOW ANY MORE VIETNAMESE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS. ALL FUTURE BOAT LANDINGS WOULD BE TOWED OUT TO INTERNATIONAL WATERS.

THE GROUP ALSO INSTRUCTED THE VIETNAMESE TO SINK THEIR BOATS ON REACHING MALAYSIAN WATERS SO THAT THEY COULD BE ALLOWED INTO THE COUNTRY.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID: +IF THIS GROUP THINK THAT THEY CAN ASSIST THE VIETNAMESE IN THIS WAY ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS, WE CAN DO EVEN MORE BY REPAIRING THEIR BOATS AND GIVING THEM BETTER MAPS AND COMPASSES TO GO TO OTHER COUNTRIES.+

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HE SAID THAT WHEN THE BOAT PEOPLE LEFT VIETNAM, THEIR INTENDED FINAL DESTINATION WAS NOT MALAYSIA BUT TO COUNTRIES LIKE THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE.

ON THE 54,000 ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS NOW IN THIS COUNTRY, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO GET THEM OUT.

SINCE THESE PEOPLE HAD INTENDED TO COME TO MALAYSIA ON A TEMPORARY BASIS, BEFORE RESETTLEMENT IN THIRD COUNTRIES, THEY HAVE TO LEAVE.

+WE ARE VERY FIRM ABOUT THIS,+ HE SAID.

HOWEVER, HE ADDED, THE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS WOULD BE ASKED TO LEAVE IN BATCHES. —BERNAMA MORE 1525/AH

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ON HIS TWO-DAY VISIT TO SABAH, THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAISED THE STATE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS SUCCESS IN IMPROVING THE STATE'S FINANCIAL POSITION.

SABAH WHICH IN THE PAST WAS FACING A SHORTAGE OF FUNDS WAS NOW ENJOYING A HEALTHY SURPLUS, HE ADDED.

HOWEVER, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID SABAH COULD NOT DEPEND ENTIRELY ON TIMBER EXPORTS ESPECIALLY IN LOG FORM.

STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN TO PROCESS LOGS INTO FINISHED PRODUCTS SO THAT THE RATE OF TIMBER DEPLETION CAN BE CHECKED.

HE ALSO COMMENDED THE STATE GOVERNMENT FOR LAUNCHING ITS PEOPLE'S ECONOMIC PROJECTS PROGRAMME IN EVERY VILLAGE, WHICH HE SAID SHOULD BE ADOPTED IN OTHER STATES AS WELL.

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COMMENTING ON THE HIGH COST OF LIVING IN SABAH, THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SAID THIS COULD BE BROUGHT DOWN IF THE DEPENDENCE ON IMPORTS ESPECIALLY ON FOODSTUFFS WAS REDUCED BY GROWING THEM LOCALLY.

THE STATE SHOULD CONCENTRATE MORE ON AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS SUCH AS THE SABAH GOVERNMENT CATTLE FARM IN AUSTRALIA AND ITS FOOD GROWING PROJECTS.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR ALSO AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO CONSIDER INTRODUCING CTV FOR VIEWERS IN SABAH AND SARAWAK OVER CHANNEL 3 IT DID NOT INVOLVE EXTRA COSTS IN MAINTENANCE.

+I CANNOT GIVE THE GREEN LIGHT NOW AS THE MATTER WILL BE STUDIED FURTHER,+ HE ADDED. —BERNAMA 1606/AH