

Govt will close Pulau Bidong: PM

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The Government will not re-consider its decision to close down the refugee camp at Pulau Bidong, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He told Mr Lee Lam Thye (DAP-Bukit Bintang) in a written reply that the decision was final and the closure of Pulau Bidong would go on as scheduled.

Dr Mahathir added that the question whether the Government took into consideration "humanitarian principles" did not arise because Malaysia was always humanitarian in any action it took.

Refugees

Mr Lee had asked whether the Government would re-consider its decision to close down the refugee camp until an alternative solution was found to the Vietnamese refugee influx problem.

To another question from Mr Lee, Dr Mahathir said at the end of May this year, there were 13,549 Vietnamese refugees in the country.

Since 1975 until May this year,

about 217,928 refugees had been resettled in third countries.

Of these, the United States took in the largest amount at 88,560, followed by Australia with 42,023 and Canada with 27,528.

The US took in another 37,155 through the Refugee Processing Centre in the Philippines and 2,782 from the Refugee Processing Centre in Pulau Galang.

The other countries were:

France (5,669), West Germany (3,566), Switzerland (2,475), Netherlands (1,558), New Zealand (1,534) and Sweden (1,225).

Italy (781), Austria (520), Denmark (512), Belgium (498), United Kingdom (423), Norway (383), Finland (245), Japan (204) and Ireland (105).

South Korea took in one refugee with China and Brazil two each and Taiwan, Gabon and Cameroon three each.

Panama took in four, Vietnam re-accepted 15, Iceland 34, Greece 54 and Hong Kong 63.