

# ILLEGALS TO BE DEPORTED

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By Wong Chun Wai

**GENTING HIGHLANDS, Thurs. — The Government will deport the thousands of illegal immigrants in Sabah, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.**

The prime minister said the authorities would be directed to identify these immigrants.

"We will act humanely and not simply round them up and send back by boats," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is also home minister, said the Sabah authorities faced problems in dealing with the influx of the illegals as the state had a long coastline.

"It is difficult to guard the whole coastline," he said, adding: "The problem is that you send them back today,

they will be back the next day."

Dr Mahathir was commenting on a statement by Sabah Finance Minister Datuk Bernard Dompok that there were now about 700,000 illegal immigrants in the state.

Datuk Dompok said the illegals would outnumber Sabahans by the year 2008 if the problem was left unchecked.

He also said that in the islands off Semporna, Kudat, Sandakan and Tawau, virtually all the residents were illegal immigrants.

He added that a 1988 survey indicated that an average of 500 illegal immigrants were arriving in Sabah each month to join their family members and friends.

Dr Mahathir, speaking to newsmen after a closed-door meeting with top government officials here, gave an assurance that the Government would not relax its efforts to stop illegal immigration.

On his meeting with the officials, he said it was a "normal one" to enable him to express his views on the role of the administration in the next decade.

He said the officials were also told of the need to adopt a positive attitude to changes and to adapt to them.

"The civil service must act as an agency to develop the nation, particularly now that our economy is growing," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the officials were told that they must put in every effort to ensure the success of the privatisation and *Malaysia Incorporated* programmes.

He said he was satisfied with the performance of the civil service although there was still room for improvement.