

Dr M: We will help the Thais

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By Rashid Yusof

ALOR STAR, Tues. — The Prime Minister said the Government will co-operate with Thai authorities in investigating the mysterious deaths of hundreds of its oversea nationals, two of whom died here.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the cause of their mysterious deaths had to be ascertained, adding that the Government would take necessary preventive actions once the causes were found.

He added that it was strange for the young and healthy people to die without any obvious reasons.

He said the deaths of the two Thais, which he learnt

from newspaper reports, might or might not be similar in nature to the many mysterious deaths of Thais working in other countries, especially Singapore and Brunei.

"Our local doctors now have already started investigating the matter," he said shortly before he and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali returned to Kuala Lumpur.

He was commenting on the mysterious deaths of Sinuhitaya Soe, 42, and Nee Krabathong, 34, at the Padang Terap Sugarcane Plantation on Feb 11 and Feb 13.

For the past two days, a Thai investigating team set up to probe into the

mysterious deaths of 200 Thai workers in Singapore since 1983, was here to investigate the two deaths. Among other things, the team spoke to local doctors and went to the *kongsi* houses where they took some blood samples from the Thai workers.

Dr Mahathir also said the country valued the services of the Thai workers, adding that that if they were not needed here, they would not have been hired.

He said such mysterious deaths had also occurred elsewhere, as widely reported.

"I was told that there were also Filipinos working in other countries who died for unknown reasons.

"It might have been drugs ... we do not know."

Meanwhile, Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Haji Osman Aroff said as far as he knew, the living conditions of Thai workers here were satisfactory, and that he had not received any complaints so far.

"We have standard labour laws and if there are any complaints, the Labour Department will investigate them."

A group of Thai labourers at the Padang Terap Sugarcane Plantation reportedly said that many fellow Thais had left the sugar estate because of deplorable living conditions.