

Govt to simplify foreign labour intake

THE Government will review the existing regulations to simplify the process of approval for the use of foreign labour, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

This was also with a view to increasing their intake to meet existing acute shortages of labour at the skilled and unskilled levels in some sectors of the economy, he said.

"Initially, the relaxation in the use of foreign labour will be for two to three years to enable Malaysians to acquire requisite skills and to allow industries sufficient time to adjust their production techniques towards the use of less labour," the Prime Minister said.

To assist the private sector in the recruitment of foreign personnel for high level skills at the management and technical levels which were in short supply, the Government would also consider requests from the spouses of these personnel for temporary employment in Malaysia, he added. On illegal immigrant workers, Dr Mahathir said the Government would set up a machinery to monitor the use of foreign labour to eliminate the employment of illegal immigrants.

He said the Government was considering imposing a levy on foreign workers.

He said that if foreign workers were paid the same wages as local labour and their employers paid the levy, this would mean foreign labour would be paid higher than local labour.

"This is unacceptable," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the current labour shortage was a consequence of the success of the Government's development efforts.

He said the Government was placing greater emphasis on human resource development as well as expanding the educational and training facilities to meet expanding skilled manpower needs.

Dr Mahathir said unemployment had declined from a peak of 8.3 per cent in 1986 to six per cent last year with the creation of one million jobs.