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LEAD Mahathir-Bangladeshis

FATE OF BANGLADESHI WORKERS TO BE DECIDED ON OCT 16

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 4 (Bernama) -- The fate of Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia and the question of whether to continue accepting them will be decided by the National Security Council (NSC) at its meeting on Oct 16, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

The Prime Minister said the NSC would consider the possibility of Malaysia reducing the intake of Bangladeshi workers in the wake of the social problems created by them in this country.

"This matter was raised by Umno Supreme Council members and I as the chairman of the NSC will bring it up at the NSC meeting," he told reporters after chairing the monthly meeting of the Supreme Council here.

Lately there had been many negative reports concerning Bangladeshi workers in this country including about their involvement in fights with local people in Pulau Pinang and Johor and their relations with local women.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said the Supreme Council members viewed seriously the social problems created by Bangladeshi workers and left it to the NSC to take appropriate action.

The Prime Minister said he had all along reminded Malaysians that the country could face social problems if it depended too much on foreign labour.

He said his fear had now become a reality with reports on social problems created by foreign workers appearing almost every day.

Dr Mahathir blamed the large presence of foreign workers in this country at the attitude of Malaysians who were not keen to do labour intensive jobs.

"We sometimes look for the easy way out just like some of the Middle East countries. They (the people in these countries) prefer to take in foreign workers because they don't want to work," he said.

He said although the government accepted the fact that Malaysia needed foreign workers to cope with its rapid development, it regretted the attitude of unemployed Malaysians to decline to do labour intensive jobs.

The Prime Minister was asked if he would discuss about Indonesian workers in this country when he meets President Suharto who arrives here on Sunday for a two-day visit.

Dr Mahathir said he would not raise the subject because Suharto's visit was taking place before the NSC would be making any decision on foreign workers.

The hour-long Supreme Council meeting also received the report of the Umno disciplinary committee under the chairmanship of party deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on money politics, power abuse and breaches to the ban on campaigning for the party's October election.

Dr Mahathir said the committee did not have any concrete evidence to take action against the candidates concerned and therefore the number of candidates contesting remained at 185.

However, he said the Security Council had agreed to drop 15 delegates because they were bankrupt -- 13 of them from the list of delegates to the party general assembly on Oct 10-12 and two others to the Umno Youth conference on Oct 9.

He said the dropped delegates would not be replaced.

Dr Mahathir said the Supreme Council repeated its warning to party members to abide by the ban on campaigning until the party election was

over. -- BERNAMA
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