

17 OCT 1996

Mahathir-NSC

SEVERE PUNISHMENT INCLUDING CANING FOR ILLEGAL ENTRY

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 17 (Bernama) -- Foreign workers entering the country illegally will be severely dealt with, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Speaking to newsmen after attending a fund-raising dinner for Marine Park Trust Fund at Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here tonight, Dr Mahathir said: "Illegal immigrants and whoever employ them will be severely dealt with, and the government had decided that they be caned."

The Prime Minister said the National Security Council (NSC) which met today had discussed at length the problems posed by illegal foreign workers in the country, numbering almost one million.

"We talked about illegal immigrants and we decided to take stern stand in action to curb the influx of illegal foreign workers into the country," said Dr Mahathir who is also the NSC chairman.

He said the illegals would be deported back to their countries of origin, and for those caught coming back illegally, the punishment would be increased to include caning.

Dr Mahathir said similar punishment would be meted out against the intermediaries including caning as the government viewed the problem with seriousness.

"The existing laws regarding the matter are not enough. We want them to be very severe. I want the surveillance along the coasts of the country to be further increased in order to prevent illegals from coming in," he added.

The Prime Minister said he could not tell off-hand the exact number of illegals now in the country, but said what was evident was that the number of illegals were much more than those working legally.

Among dignitaries present at the dinner were his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Minister of Agriculture Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud, Minister of Science, Technology and Environment Datuk Law Hieng Ding, the Pro-tem President of Malaysian Sports Diving Association (MSDA) Mukriz Mahathir and President of Diving Equipment and Manufacturing Association (DEMA) of USA, Lee Selisky. -- BERNAMA

ZAB ABG