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Be strict in enforcement of rules

L.T.H

IT'S quite reassuring to hear that the Government is now really serious about tackling the illegal immigrant problem.

The Minister of Home Affairs, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, and the Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Rahim Noor recently made very bold statements about the seriousness of the illegal immigrant problem which has become the country's biggest threat.

Nowadays, foreign labour has become such a common feature.

Thehawker stalls that I regularly patronise are now being assisted by people who look like Thais or Myanmar.

Seafood restaurants are now being staffed with Bangladeshi assistants. My regular service station is now staffed by Myanmar mechanics.

Most recently I found that a young salesman going around selling children's games and books was an Indonesian. It is frightening to know that we are being swamped by these immigrants and not knowing how many of them are actually legal.

The deadline given by the Government for illegal immigrants to register themselves has proven to be not very successful. The subsequent extension given to them was also found to be rather unsuccessful.

Apparently the illegal immigrants are not deterred by the fine or deportation because the risks involved are nothing compared to the hardship they would have to face at home or the benefits they are enjoying now outweigh the possible punishment.

Punishing them through fines, imprisonment and deportation is obviously not enough. A tougher approach including mandatory caning should also be instituted. This should also apply to those who help to bring them in, harbour or employ them.

Our country is known for making rules after rules but what is sadly lacking is the stamina to enforce them.

Look at the rubbish dumps. We have laws and signboards in many places indicating the punishment for littering. Yet we see people everywhere throwing rubbish without a second thought - even at places where signboards prominently display the no-littering sign.

We also saw some time back enforcement on the pricing of imported fruits following the lifting of import taxes. Not long after the initial enforcement, fruit sellers increased their prices again.

Recently the Health Minister announced that the Government decided to ban smoking in all public places including restaurants. Go to any restaurant now and you can see smokers ignoring the rule.

It is a shame that while we have made many good laws and rules for the benefit of the rakyat the dismal weakness in enforcement has made a mockery of these rules. Let us hope that the present campaign to flush out illegal immigrants will be effective.

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