

BERNAMA EDITORIAL EXTRACTS

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The problem of illegal immigrant workers has again surfaced as the main topic of commentary by newspapers.

NEW STRAITS TIMES points out that employers are equally to blame for the illegal entry if they were not as eager to reward them for it.

Foreign workers are no longer just a temporary solution to an acute shortage of labour in this country.

The substantial and uncounted number of illegal immigrants is turning the role of the foreign workers from a temporary, controllable solution to a permanent uncontrollable need.

The daily says the illegals are not only responsible for the rise in crime and disease but also for the "black market" wages that undercut market rates and keep them in demand.

The too-few questions attitude of employers have added up to the presence of 1.2 million illegals whom the Government had to deal with.

The problem represents the largest internal security operation to be mobilised since the Emergency.

Far from flexing the long arm of the law, the Government gave employers the opportunity to legalise all unregistered illegal workers but only a minority of them bothered to give their workers the benefit of legal standing.

The paper concludes that if the social menace of illegal immigration is to be stopped, the employers must get no more slack.

The STAR clarifies only a concerted effort is needed to deal with the problem of illegal immigrants.

It will not just go away unless the Government and the people make a conscious effort to deal with them effectively.

The daily says because of the good wages they can get in Malaysia, many foreigners are not prepared to come through the "front door" and aided by unscrupulous syndicates, they have been arriving in hordes by the "back door" instead.

The nation cannot afford to have an estimated one-million such illegal immigrants working in the country and no one is even sure of their exact number.

The paper feels that if force has to be used so be it. There is no point in detaining these people and put them in camps. It is better to stop them at the border and make sure they stay out.

Those caught sneaking in should be harshly dealt with so that these people would get the message that should they continue to come in illegally.

The daily says the Government can be assured of full backing from the people in resolving this problem as quickly as possible before things really get out of hand.

CHINA PRESS stresses that the country's growth and industrialisation should no longer depend on foreign workers.

According to the Economic Adviser to the Government Tun Daim Zainuddin, foreign workers remit about RM6 billion yearly to their countries. He warned that the problem, if unsolved, will be a time bomb.

The paper points out that there are some two million foreign workers in the country. Their ratio to Malaysian is about 1:5.

Besides social problems, they have also posed a security threat to the country.

It says the government, to a certain degree, has to be blamed for the influx of such large number of foreigners into the country.

Employers too must not try to rely on cheap foreign labours to carry

out their businesses. They must turn to hi-tech if they want to remain competitive.

It says whatever development will have little meaning if the people's living standard and security are not upgraded.

The government must not hesitate to crackdown hard on illegal workers after the registration has ended.

NANYANG SIANG PAU in welcoming the staggered working hours being introduced in the Klang Valley starting this year, describes the move as a good decision.

Under the pilot project, five departments - Road Transport, Customs, Immigration, National Registration and Public Services -- will open from 7.30am to 6.30 pm on weekdays and from 7.30am to 2pm on Saturdays.

The system is aimed at providing better service to the public. It is also hoped to help ease traffic congestion.

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It says the latest being a body set up by the KTM to investigate the car-train collision near Segamat.

The daily says these bodies can only make recommendations and suggest on how to avoid future accidents but the proposal they make cannot ensure that the same accidents will not recur.

There is a difference between an enforcement and a proposal, the paper stresses.

A proposal no matter how good if not followed by an action will only result in the proposal being repeated whenever another body conducts an investigation.

The paper was commenting on the latest accident between a train and a car in which six family members died in Bukit Siput on Tuesday.

It is unfair to blame anybody over the accident, however, if road users are more careful, the tragedy could have been avoided.

It better for the railway management to quickly find a safer method to avoid an accident of such nature from happening.

TAMIL NESAN writes on the call by the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir to upgrade the tourism Industry to in order to attract local and foreign tourists.

The paper says the country is famous for its natural beauty, especially with its enchanting 800km-long stretch of beach in the east coast and other attractive spots throughout the country.

Developing, maintaining and promoting these spots will attract tourists and this will directly contribute to the economy of the country.

Attractive places such as forests, waterfalls and springs would be wasted if steps are not taken to develop and maintain them.

The paper also supports PM's call on all parties involved in the industry to work closely to promote tourism in the country.
Bernama