

BERNAMA NEWSPAPER DIGEST

03 JAN 97

The deportation of the first batch of more than 1,500 Indonesian illegal immigrants got underway when they board an Indonesian naval ship from Pasir Gudang port in Johor yesterday.

They were from eight immigration depots nationwide and two prisons in Johor to be sent home.

The STAR, SUN and TAMIL NESAN which gave front page lead to the item, report that this is the first time that Indonesia has despatched a naval ship to ferry home its citizens.

Previously, Malaysian authorities would send them home using ferries and chartered boats.

The deportees are among those who failed to register during the six month amnesty provided by the Foreign Workers Task Force last year.

The period to legalise the illegals ended at midnight last Tuesday and the task force warned that it would mounth a nationwide house-to-house search to flush out illegals workers and punish those harbouring them.

Meanwhile, the STAR and SIN CHEW JIT POH quote the Deputy Home Minister Ong Ka Ting as saying that raids to purge the country of the estimated one million illegal foreign workers will be intensified.

In a front page lead, the NEW STRAITS TIMES and MALAYSIA NANBAN report that the system designed to provide better service to the people is on a six-month trial period.

The departments involved are the Public Service, Road Transport, Immigration, National Registration, and the Custom and Excise.

Officials from threee of the departments -- Immigration, NatiOnal Regiowstration and Public Service -- said although the response from th epublic was moderate, they expected it to be much better as more people became aware of the longer working hours.

The working hours are from 7.30am to 6.30pm from Mondays to Fridays and 7.30am to 2pm on Saturdays.

The staggered working hours concept was an initial step towards implementing the flexitime approach to encourage more women to enter the workforce.

According to the SUN, staff of government departments involved in staggered working hours, have generally welcomed the idea, as at least it is easier for them to send their children to school.

Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said the Anti Corruption Agency, ACA, has the power to investigate Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhamad Muhamad Taib who was charged for failing to declare a large amount of money in Australia.

NANYANG SIANG PAU in its report says the Prime Minsiter, however, is satisfied with Tan Sri Muhamad's explanation.

Tan Sri Muhamad failed to declare RM2.4 million when he left Australia.

In another development, BERITA HARIAN reports the ACA is investigating a former staff of Selangor Menteri Besar's office following a RM1.5 million cash found in his car during a raid at his house last month.

It quote sources as saying that the ACA came upon the case when investigating a land status of a 40-hectare forest at Bukit Sungai Putih, Hulu Langat.

The area was gazetted as a reserved land in 1972 but the Selangor's state exco meeting in 1990 revoked the gazette to allow logging and development to be carried out.

UTUSAN MALAYSIA, in a front page lead, says up to Sept 30 last year, a balance of RM3.13 billion debts has yet to be settled by about two millions credit card holders.

Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Wong See Wah said during the same period, they had spent about RM6.68 billion through the use of credit cards and RM1.43 billion of the amount was spend on shopping and cash withdrawals.

BUSINESS TIMES reports that the Malaysian capital market is growing fast, no doubt about it. Attesting to this is the rapid expansion of the local bourse which in 1996 saw a record 92 companies being listed.

The daily also says that Tenaga Nasional Bhd, which has landed properties said to be worth some RM2 billion, has announced plans to become a major property developer.

CHINA PRESS highlights on a 10-year old girl student was reported missing after playing hide-and-seek with friends near her house in Muar, Johore. Nearly 100 residents joined the search but failed to find the girl.

According to HARIAN WATAN, a deviant teaching group is luring girls and older men to join the group, especialy in northern states and Sabah.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman said the group which is based in a neighbouring country is said to be sex-oriented, encouraging the followers to produce more of their family members.

Describing the move as crucial for national stability and security, Ong urged employers to put aside personal and business interests to help the authorities weed them out.

He said: "There should be no more excuses from anyone saying that they have to depend on illegal foreign labour. We will not compromise.

Adequate time and warnings have been issued before the Dec 31 deadline expired two day ago."

Ong pointed out the problem of illegal foreign workers had been around for too long.

He said the Government was in the process of gazetting the Immigration Act (Amendment) 1996 in which employers who hired illegals could be fined up to RM50,000 for each worker.

Illegal workers who return to Malaysia after deportation could be given six strokes of the rotan, fined RM10,000 or jailed up to five years or both.

The staggered working hours system introduced in five government departments in the Klang Valley yesterday went on smoothy but received moderate response from the public.

BERNAMA