

01/04/1998

Indonesia to help repatriate illegals

Joseph Bingkasan in London

MALAYSIA and Indonesia have agreed to co-operate in repatriating Indonesians who have entered the country without proper travel documents, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday.

He said this at a joint Press conference with his Indonesian counterpart, Ali Alatas, following a closed-door meeting between the two Ministers at the Inter-Continental Hotel here.

Both Ministers were in London to attend the Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem 2) which begins on Thursday.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad heads the Malaysian delegation while the Indonesian delegation is led by its Vice-President, B.J. Habibie.

Abdullah said Malaysia's right to arrest and repatriate Indonesians who had entered the country illegally had long been recognised by the Indonesian Government.

Both Ministers discussed the problem of illegal immigrants following a riot at the Semenyih Immigration detention centre last Thursday.

Among the issues discussed was action to be taken against new arrivals of Indonesians in Malaysia without travel documents.

Abdullah said the Indonesian Government was willing to assist Malaysia by bringing back the illegal immigrants, engaging in a joint-navy patrol to prevent illegal entry and providing and sharing the costs of deportation.

Ali said his Government was committed to maintaining co-operation with Malaysia.

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