

28 AUG 1998

Tajol-immigrants

PM GRANTS MERDEKA AMNESTY FOR ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today agreed to grant amnesty for illegal immigrants to return to their home countries legally, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Tajol Rosli Ghazali said today.

He said Dr Mahathir made the decision in his capacity as Home Minister after recommendations from the Immigration Department and in conjunction with the 41st National Day.

"The amnesty period begins Aug 31 and ends Oct 31," he told a news conference here.

However, Tajol Rosli said, those wanted by the enforcement agencies for criminal offences would not be allowed to leave under the amnesty.

He said, illegal immigrants taking part in the two month-long amnesty must organise their travel documents on their own with the respective embassies which had been requested to assist in the programme.

They need not go to the Immigration Department to get an Exit Check Memo or special pass to leave the country.

Tajol Rosli said they only need to bring their travel papers and tickets and could leave via any exit points.

He said no compound fines under the Immigration Act such as illegal entry, illegal stay, overstaying or entry using suspect visa, would be imposed against those who own up under the amnesty.

Personal details of those who left the country under the amnesty must be handed over to the authorities at the exit point, he said.

The amnesty covered all foreign nationals including their family members but is focused on illegals from Indonesia, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, China, Myanmar and some African countries.

Tajol Rosli called on all illegal immigrants to take up the chance to leave legally under the amnesty.

"Those who entered and worked illegally or overstayed in this country, occupy squatter areas and government land, estates and farmland should all take up this chance offered by the government," he said.

Nation-wide large scale enforcement operations would be launched soon after the amnesty expired, he said.

"The main target of the operations will be employers who still employ illegal immigrants," he said.

Tajol Rosli said all airlines and transport companies including ferry operators have been requested to cooperate in this matter.

Meanwhile in MELAKA, the Marine Police foiled an attempt by seven Indonesian illegal immigrants to sneak out of the country to Dumai in Sumatra through Melaka port this morning.

State Public Order and Traffic Chief Supt Onn Ahmad said the men, aged between 23 and 38, hid in the boat for five hours before being discovered by patrolmen at about 10.30am.

Onn said it was believed that the illegals paid RM500 each to the boat tekong or skipper for the trip home.

-- BERNAMA

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