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Those who've not left now face arrest

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PORT KLANG, Sun. - The Immigration Department will step up nationwide enforcement efforts to nab foreigners who work in Malaysia without work permits as the amnesty deadline ends at midnight.

The aggressive enforcement follows the decision by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who is also the Home Affairs Minister not to extend the amnesty deadline and the directive to Immigration Department and police to take stern action against illegal immigrants in the country.

Immigration director-general Datuk Aseh Che Mat said immigration enforcement officers had been directed to be strict in enforcing the law and start arresting illegal immigrants from tomorrow.

He said the Government had extended the amnesty deadline from Oct 31 to Nov 15 to give illegal immigrants an opportunity to return home.

"The Government has been lenient and considerate and those who fail to leave the country will have to face the consequences," he told reporters after witnessing the departure of 450 Indonesians to their homeland from South Port here today.

Aseh said with the amnesty deadline having come to an end, the Immigration Department would not approve new applications for foreign workers to work here except the renewal of permits for the existing ones.

Aseh said the programme gave foreigners an opportunity to return home without being arrested and charged in court.

Today, about 450 left for Belawan and Tanjung Balai in three ferries provided by Syarikat Doyan Shipping and Forwarding.

Up to Friday, a total of 172,962 illegal immigrants had left for their homelands under the amnesty programme.

Aseh said the department would also take stern action against Malaysians and employers who engage or harbour illegal immigrants.

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