

08 MAR 1998

Abdullah

M'SIA-INDON JOINT COMMISSION TO DISCUSS ILLEGAL MIGRATION

KEPALA BATAS, March 8 (Bernama) -- The incessant influx of Indonesian illegal immigrants which is alarming Malaysia, will be discussed at this year's meeting of the Malaysia-Indonesia Joint Commission, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

"The mass exodus of illegal immigrants from Indonesia seems unabated despite an understanding between both countries on stemming it," he told reporters after opening the Bertam Umno branch annual general meeting here.

Malaysia viewed the matter very seriously and had often taken it up with Indonesian leaders, he said.

The issue was not new and the Indonesian government was fully aware of how Malaysia would deal with such illegal immigrants, he said.

Abdullah said Malaysia had stressed in past meetings of the joint commission that there should be efforts on the part of the Indonesian authorities to curb the migration of illegal workers from the republic to Malaysia.

However, he said, it would be quite difficult for Indonesia to check its citizens from illegally sneaking out given the republic's long coastline.

Moreover, trespassing Malaysian waters was relatively easy for them, he said.

Abdullah took to task the handful of Malaysians who colluded in facilitating passage to the illegal immigrants into the country.

"Such acts contravene the law of the country and we're fortunate to have acted fast by detaining them under the Internal Security Act," he said.

On Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's two-day official visit to Myanmar beginning tomorrow, Abdullah said it would be the first such visit there by the Prime Minister since Myanmar joined Asean in July last year.

"The visit is of special significance to Malaysia as it not only enables the prime minister to discuss bilateral matters but also the current economic situation affecting the region," he said.

Earlier in his speech, Abdullah said party members could determine the future course of UMNO and contribute towards national consolidation by upholding the practice of consensus and rejecting money politics.

The democracy practised in the country is in line with the concept of consensus which Islam advocates, said Abdullah, who is also an UMNO vice-president and Bertam branch chief.

Abdullah criticised UMNO members who turned violent during party elections and hoped it would not end up being a party of thugs.

"The Umno struggle is based on sincerity, sacrifice and strong patriotism and not based on money, violence or force," he added.-- BERNAMA

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