

18/10/2000

Illegals to be deported (HL)

Ashraf Abdullah; Zubaidah Abu Bakar

LANGKAWI, Tues. - Malaysia and Indonesia today agreed that the hundreds of thousands of Indonesians who had entered Malaysia illegally would be deported.

The cost of deportation will be borne by both Governments.

Emerging from a two-hour meeting with Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid today, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Indonesia acknowledged the problems faced by Malaysia in dealing with the Indonesian illegal immigrants.

"If they can find jobs here, then it is fine. But quite often, they come here without any idea whether they can find employment.

"If they are unemployed, obviously it will create problems because someone will have to feed and house them. Then we will have to bear the cost.

"Those who have come here illegally and are unemployed have to be sent back," Dr Mahathir said at a joint Press conference with Abdurrahman.

Abdurrahman, when asked about the decision to deport the illegals, said the cost to deport them to their provinces in Indonesia would be borne by both Governments.

Malaysian Immigration authorities had said recently that their counterparts at the Dumai port had refused to accept the Indonesian illegal immigrants deported from Malaysia as they did not want to bear the cost of sending them back to their villages.

"This is an old problem and we know it. We will have to solve it amicably," said Abdurrahman, who is in Langkawi for an overnight working visit.

Abdurrahman leaves for Hong Kong tomorrow, en route to the Third Asia-Europe Meeting in Seoul.

Later, Foreign Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar told reporters that the various ministries of both countries had been tasked with solving the various problems pertaining to the deportation of the illegals.

Dr Mahathir also said Malaysia would only support the presence of a United Nations investigating team in West Timor if Indonesia invited the team.

"This is to protect Indonesia's sovereignty," he said.

Indonesia had told the United Nations Security Council that the investigating team could only go to Atambua if it was invited by the Government because it was its right as a sovereign state.

"If Indonesia invites the investigating team to go to Atambua, then Malaysia will be quite happy to be a member of the team," Syed Hamid said.

The UN is seeking to send a team to investigate the recent killing of three officials of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Dr Mahathir said various other issues were also discussed at the meeting.

This included the joint promotion of Batam Island as an Asean city as well as joint exploration and production of offshore petroleum.

(END)