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Mahathir-Immigrants

MALAYSIA TO DEPORT UNEMPLOYED ILLEGAL INDONS, SAYS PM

LANGKAWI, Oct 17 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will deport illegal Indonesian immigrants who are unemployed, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

"Those who are here and unemployed and came illegally, we have to send them back," he said at a joint press conference with Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid after bilateral talks at the Sheraton Perdana Hotel here today.

Abdurrahman arrived here today for a two-day working visit.

Asked by an Indonesian journalist whether Malaysia would legalise illegal Indonesian immigrants in the country, Dr Mahathir said: "If we got job for them, it will be fine.

"But quite often they have come here without any idea whether they can get employment or not."

"If they are unemployed, obviously it will create problem because somebody will have to feed them, house them and that is a cost to us," Dr Mahathir said.

Abdurrahman said both countries agreed to share the costs of deporting jobless illegal Indonesian immigrants.

"We agree to jointly settle the problem. The agreement reached is for both countries to share the deportation costs," said the Indonesian president.

Legalising illegal Indonesian immigrants was one of wide-ranging topics covered by the two sides in striving to enhance bilateral relations.

The influx of Indonesian illegal immigrants had over the years caused economic, health and social problems for Malaysia.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar later told Malaysian journalists that the relevant agencies of both countries would work closely in arranging for the deportation of jobless illegal Indonesian immigrants.

"The process to deport unemployed Indonesian illegal immigrants would be carried out more smoothly with the cooperation of agencies of both countries in the future," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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