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Mahathir-Foreigners

PM REGRETS CLAIMS OF POOR TREATMENT ON FOREIGNERS

CYBERJAYA, June 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed regret over allegations that Malaysia did not provide good treatment to foreign nationals in the country.

Malaysia had opened its doors to foreign nationals and provided them with a place to stay, such deed was however not appreciated, he said.

In fact, the prime minister said, Malaysia was now facing the problem of its nationals being kidnapped which, according to him, was a threat to the country.

"We don't do anything. We give them a place (to stay), but we get something bad in return. We are faced with the problem of our people being kidnapped. This is a threat to us," he told reporters after launching the Motorola Software Centre, here.

He was referring to the abduction of 21 people including nine Malaysian nationals by a group of armed men on Sipadan Island on April 23, and who are now being held on Jolo Island in south Philippines.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked whether Malaysia would tighten surveillance to prevent Philippine illegal immigrants from entering Sabah.

There are more than 500,000 Philippine nationals in Sabah now.

"We open our country to them (foreigners). (But) today we are accused of giving poor treatment to them," Dr Mahathir said.

When asked on appropriate measures to be taken to tighten surveillance, the prime minister said the matter would have to be thought of first.

The Malaysian government had repeatedly refuted accusations by some quarters previously that it did not provide good treatment to illegal immigrants in Sabah.

-- BERNAMA

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