

# Megawati to raise migrant issue with PM

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**JAKARTA:** President Megawati Sukarnoputri will raise the issue of Indonesian illegal workers in Malaysia during talks with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad during his visit to Bali on Aug 7-8, Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda was quoted as saying in a local newspaper yesterday.

"We will raise the issue of Indonesian workers (in Malaysia) as part of the main agenda during the bilateral talks," *The Jakarta Post* quoted him as saying.

The minister said the talks will be a follow-up to the previous meeting held last August.

The meeting between Megawati and Mahathir was

scheduled for February but was postponed because of their heavy work commitments.

Malaysia has toughened its law against illegal workers who are mostly Indonesians seeking better fortune in that country.

The migrants have been given till end of the month to return home under an amnesty arrangement or face legal action under the new immigration laws which will take effect on Aug 1.

Illegal entrants can be liable to canning, three-months jail term and RM10,000 fine if convicted for illegally entering the country to work while Malaysians who employ illegal migrants can be sentenced

to three-months jail and imposed with a RM5,000 fine.

The strict measures came about after a violent incident involving Indonesian workers at a hostel of a textile company in Nilai, Negri Sembilan, on Jan 17.

Fifteen of them were held responsible for the incident.

Indonesian Foreign Ministry spokesman Marty Natalegawa said Indonesia had ordered its embassy in Kuala Lumpur to call on Indonesian illegal immigrants to leave the country before the enforcement of the law.

In **KOTA KINABALU**, the second secretary of the Philippine embassy in Malaysia, Giovanni Palec, yesterday expressed the

hope that the Malaysian authorities will give Filipino illegal immigrants a week or two to leave the country after the amnesty period ends.

"I hope we can make some arrangements with the local authority to grant them an additional week or two to leave," he said.

"Where we see no indication of an extension, what we want is to be able to get those who have registered themselves during the amnesty period to leave without penalties after that period."

He said although some of the immigrants had applied for travel documents to return home, there were not enough ferries to take them back to Zamboanga.