

Syed Hamid: We won't act on mere media reports

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia will not act on mere media reports alleging mistreatment of Filipino and Indonesian illegal immigrants in detention centres here, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said yesterday.

"There is no need for us to respond to all media reports, which are bent on wrecking our good relationship with the countries.

"Malaysia's deportation process of illegal immigrants is guided by accepted laws and norms. We are not cruel and in-

humane to these people.

"We have been very cooperative in housing and-feeding them, and going out of our way to provide whatever that is needed to send them back.

"We understand the difficulty of the countries to handle their side of the immigration process, but we also ask them to understand our position," he said after meeting 140 *Mastika* magazine readers selected to visit Turkey in October, here.

He said about 400,000 illegals from Indonesia and the Philippines had been deported since Malaysia imposed caning penalties on illegals.

In Manila, AP reported that Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo called Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad late yesterday.

Arroyo spokesman Ignacio Bunye said they discussed "substantial issues," but he would not be specific. She would make a statement today, he added.

The call came shortly after former President Fidel Ramos rebuffed Arroyo's plan to send him as a personal emissary to Malaysia to discuss better treatment of Filipinos being deported from Sabah.