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Dr M unhappy with Amien's comments

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is unhappy with Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly speaker Amien Rais' comments on the caning of Indonesian illegal immigrants who failed to observe the amnesty.

The Prime Minister said no one had complained about Singapore which had similar caning of illegal immigrants.

"Actually, Singapore also has the same thing but I don't see anybody complaining. You stay long enough in Singapore, you get a whipping. We learnt this from Singapore," Dr Mahathir told reporters after a ceremony to mark the completion of the Putrajaya Lake.

He was commenting on Amien's statement that Malaysia's laws which allowed the whipping of illegal immigrants was "inhumane" as Malaysia and Indonesia shared the same roots.

"I don't conduct relations with other countries like that," he said.

In Port Klang, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said illegal immigrants had been given ample time and warning to leave the country voluntarily before the amended Immigration Act was enforced.

As some immigrants chose to ignore the warnings, he said action had to be taken against them as provided under the new law.

"For those who opposed, ignored (the warnings) and disobeyed our laws, we have to act," he told a Press conference after launching Northport container terminal three at Wharf 12.

The Deputy Prime Minister said outsiders should not question the country's laws which were formulated and passed by Parliament.

"The law applies to all ...the locals (who harbour immigrants), Indonesians and immigrants from other countries."

Abdullah said the court had also sentenced non-Indonesian immigrants under the law, thus dismissing claims that only Indonesians were targeted.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Amien should "avoid being emotional" and instead encourage Indonesians to enter Malaysia legally.