

**Mass deportations from Sabah to begin next month**  
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The authorities plan to deport 150,000 mostly Filipino and Indonesian illegal migrants from Sabah in a massive operation to begin in August.  
MCPX

najib pc in parliamnet on altantuya murder case allegations 030708Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak said foreigners in Sabah, a state which has been a magnet for illegal migrants for decades, would be sent home if found without legal visas.

"Large-scale operations will begin in August," Najib told reporters, adding that the cabinet has approved a 50-million-ringgit budget to fund the operation.

"We target at least 100,000 to 150,000 people to be deported," he said, adding it will be an ongoing programme until the state is clear of illegal migrants.

Najib said the deportations will be carried out by police, immigration authorities and a controversial volunteer squad, Rela, which has been blamed for human rights abuses in the past.

**Popular destination for illegal migrants**

Sabah, which lies between the Philippines to the north and Indonesia's Kalimantan to the south, is a popular destination for migrant workers from those countries who labour on construction sites and oil palm plantations.

The illegal settlers have been blamed for drug and crime problems, and local politicians say they are also tipping the ethnic balance against mostly Christian indigenous tribes who used to dominate the population.

Authorities say there are 130,000 illegal migrants in Sabah, but local politicians put the figure as high as 500,000.

Najib said the government was "determined" to put an end to the illegal migrant problem in the state.

"This demonstrates our political will to resolve the problem," he said.

Malaysia's government has been trying to boost its standing in Sabah since March general elections that saw unprecedented gains by the opposition.

Opposition figurehead Anwar Ibrahim has said that he plans to form a new administration, likely with the help of government lawmakers defectors from Sabah.