

Decide on citizenship

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Malaysia and Thailand to reciprocate on PR status

By PHILIP GOLINGAI
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

BANGKOK: Malaysians and Thais who hold dual citizenship will have to decide which nationality they want to retain.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said this formula was decided on at yesterday's bilateral meeting between him and his Thai counterpart Surayud Chulanont at Government House.

He said - during a joint press conference with Surayud after their meeting - that this was the most positive step taken by the two countries, which had discussed the matter for many years.

Abdullah's three-day visit to Thailand, which began on Sunday, was his first after the Sept 19 coup that brought in Surayud as Prime Minister.

Abdullah said a person who resided in Malaysia but chose Thai citizenship would be given permanent resident (PR) status for him to remain in Malaysia.

"Thailand will reciprocate in like manner for a person opting for Malaysian citizenship but wanting to stay in Thailand," he said.



Red carpet welcome: Abdullah arriving at the Royal Thai Air force base in Bangkok yesterday. He said Malaysia would look into how to help people from south Thailand seek better employment.

Abdullah said the governments would ascertain the number of people possessing dual citizenship by identifying them via their thumbprint using biometrics.

"With the technology, we will know who has dual citizenship and when we discover them, we would like them to make a choice," he said.

Last year, Thai newspaper reports claimed that there were 50,000 to 100,000 people holding dual citizenship.

Abdullah said Malaysia would also cooperate with Thailand in areas of development.

"We will look into how to help people in south Thailand gain oppor-

tunities by being trained in Malaysia so that they can seek employment with the certificate they have," he said.

Before the bilateral meeting, the Malaysian Prime Minister had an audience with King Bhumibol Adulyadej at the Dusit Palace in the Thai capital.