

KL, Bangkok to crack down on dual citizens

The Sun - 13/2/2007

BANGKOK: Thailand and Malaysia will start a crackdown on dual citizenship holders with those holding them now having to decide which nationality they want to retain, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Abdullah said for him, the formula reached here after many years of discussion was one of the most positive steps that both countries had taken to solve the issue of dual citizenship.

He said that both countries would present the number of suspected people holding dual citizenship before their respective authorities use

biometric technology to make comparisons on their identities and trace those with such status.

"When we discover this (dual citizenship), we would like them to decide which one they want to choose ... Thai or Malaysian citizenship," he said at a joint press conference with his Thai counterpart Surayud Chulanont after their bilateral meetings yesterday.

Abdullah said if they decide to remain in Malaysia in spite of being a Thai citizen, Malaysia would certainly give them permanent status to stay

and Thailand would do likewise.

Thailand, which is battling a Muslim insurgency in its southern provinces, has claimed there are between 50,000 and 100,000 people holding dual citizenship and many militants were hiding in Malaysia after committing violence in the restive south.

Abdullah and Surayud earlier had an audience with Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej at the Dusit Place.

Surayud, who assumed the Thai premiership in October following the Sept 19 coup that ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, has

sought Abdullah's help to restore peace in the Muslim-majority southern provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat, where close to 2,000 people have died in the unrest.

Abdullah said both countries discussed the type of cooperation to end the unrest in the south, which had occasionally strained diplomatic ties between the two neighbours as they celebrate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relationship.

Surayud said he and Abdullah agreed that peace, security and stability were relevant to the northern part of Malaysia and southern Thailand, adding that a peaceful environment was crucial to prosperity in the area.

In a joint statement released after the meeting, the two prime ministers expressed satisfaction with the progress in addressing the issue of dual citizenship, noting that relevant agencies in both countries had recently discussed and exchanged views about sharing their information on it.

They also agreed that violent attacks on civilians and innocent people in the south should stop. - Bernama