

# Govt should clarify, before acting against *Al Jazeera*

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Actions taken by authorities against *Al Jazeera's* reporter are unwarranted, says Dr M



**FORMER** Prime Minister (PM) Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said actions taken against Qatar-based *Al Jazeera's* reporters are unwarranted and believed the government should instead offer an account on its treatment of illegal immigrants.

In his debate on the motion of thanks for the Royal Address of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong yesterday, the Langkawi MP said the government should clarify on its operations to combat illegal immigrants as a way to counter allegations of mistreatment against undocumented workers.

"Foreigners tend to easily accuse us of being harsh on immigrants, but Europe, the US, India are harsher. The government should not take harsh actions against *Al Jazeera's* reporters. It is better if we give our side of the story," he said.

Dr Mahathir acknowledged



Dr Mahathir urges the govt to keep professionals appointed by PH at GLCs, instead of replacing them with PN-affiliated lawmakers

Pic by Muhd Amin Naharul

that illegal immigrants pose problems to the country, especially as it grapples with the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We are not a developed coun-

try, but because we provide better treatment for immigrants, many migrants choose to come to Malaysia. The number of foreigners in Malaysia has

increased to seven million.

"They (illegal immigrants) are afraid to introduce themselves because they will be sent back. Nevertheless, they should be identified so that they do not become a Covid-19 cluster. Even though we treat them well, some cases show otherwise, as if we are inconsiderate," he added.

On Monday, the National Film Development Corp Malaysia (Finas) said *Al Jazeera* did not have the necessary licence to film or air its documentary on the alleged mistreatment of migrants in Malaysia.

In a brief statement, Finas said it had carried out an investigation on *Al Jazeera International (M) Sdn Bhd* regarding the production of the documentary titled "Locked Up in Malaysia's Lockdown", which Finas said was aired over social media.

This came after Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah on Sunday reportedly said his ministry would check if *Al Jazeera* had obtained a licence from Finas to produce the documentary before it started production.

Saifuddin had said a lack of licence would be considered an

offence as permission from Finas is needed before films and documentaries can be produced in Malaysia.

The 25-minute documentary was broadcasted on *Al Jazeera's 101 East* programme on July 3 and it reported on an operation against illegal immigrants as Malaysia implemented restrictions on public activities to address the spread of the virus.

The release of the documentary led to *Al Jazeera* journalists being called up by federal police for investigations.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir has also defended the appointment of professionals to state-owned companies and agencies by Pakatan Harapan (PH), saying they should be kept. He said positions awarded to politicians are mere gifts for MPs to earn added income for supporting the government.

Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's appointment as Malaysia's eighth PM on March 1 triggered a wave of change, which has seen most Perikatan Nasional (PN)-affiliated lawmakers appointed as ministers or filling top positions at government-linked companies (GLCs) and agencies as he attempts to consolidate control over Parliament.