

MEF: Tighten borders to keep illegals out

Strict enforcement 'will make them think twice about returning'

By **FARIK ZOLKEPLI**
farik@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: The authorities must boost security at the borders following the nationwide crackdown on an estimated 500,000 illegal immigrants, said Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director Shamsuddin Bardan.

This is to ensure that the illegals do not enter into the country again, he added.

"I heard stories that those deported could easily return to Malaysia the very next day.

"The Immigration Department and other agencies must ensure the tightening of our borders once the nationwide operation is conducted," he said.

He added that strict enforcement would send the right message that illegal immigrants were not welcomed in the country.

"The authorities must enforce the law without fear or favour.

"The right kind of message will make the illegals think twice about returning to the country," he said.

Conceding that the deportation of illegals might lead to a shortage of workers especially in the construction and plantation sectors, Shamsuddin said employers should not be engaging the services of illegals in the first place.

"They (employers) must be responsible enough not to breach the law by hiring illegals. MEF fully supports any initiative to get rid of illegal workers as some of them are the cause of social ills and perhaps certain criminal activities, too," he said, adding that anyone harbouring or hiring illegals must face the law.

While the number of illegal immigrants are estimated at 500,000, Shamsuddin believed that it could be higher.

"I think every illegal immigrant should be rounded up and sent back," he said.

The Star yesterday highlighted that the authorities will be hunting down illegal immigrants in the nation's biggest-ever operation to flush out unwanted foreigners from Sunday.