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Review-Mahathir (Labour)

ONE MILLION FOREIGN WORKERS NOW IN MALAYSIA

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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 16 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is now home to about one million foreign workers.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad described the size of foreign labour in the country now as large compared with its small population of 19 million.

Tabling the Mid-Term Review of the Sixth Malaysia Plan in the Dewan Rakyat, he said while the immediate solution to the tight labour situation brought about by the rapid expansion of the economy was to use foreign labour, this could not be regarded as a solution to the problem.

"The presence of foreign labour is also placing an increasing strain on our social infrastructure, particularly housing, medical and education facilities. In addition there has been a distinct increase in unwanted social problems," he added.

The Prime Minister said a permanent solution to the problem would be the encouragement of more capital intensive technology. --more

ITEM STORED AS: PB794 PSB 00174 GE 16-12 2142 Review Mahathir (Labour)  
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Review-Mahathir (Labour) 2 (last) Kuala Lumpur

Dr Mahathir said the economic miracles of countries did not depend on their comparative advantage in natural resources endowment but rather by their ability to adopt and adapt new technologies, hard work and indigenous talents, skills, creativity and self-reliance.

As such, Malaysian industries must do the same through labour-saving processes, automation, robotisation and computerisation.

In addition, greater participation of women in the labour force would be encouraged to increase the supply of labour.

"All these must be incorporated into our national agenda for development," he added.--Bernama

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