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Australia-Students

AUSTRALIA VALUES MALAYSIAN STUDENTS' PRESENCE IN THE COUNTRY

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 18 (Bernama) -- Australia greatly values the presence of Malaysian students and their contribution towards strengthening bilateral ties, the Australian High Commissioner here said today.

William John Farmer said he is very concerned over the recent incident of racial abuse on Malaysian student Adrina Shazlin Shukor in Melbourne.

"With over 11,000 Malaysian students throughout Australia (whose families and friends would obviously number in the many thousands), I can fully understand that Malaysian leaders feel a need to respond to concerns about the welfare of students in Australia," he said in a statement.

Farmer said the Australian government finds racial abuse as quite abhorrent a behaviour and is committed to fighting racism wherever it may occur.

He said Australia appreciates the fact that statements by Malaysian government representatives have continued to note that racially motivated incidents do not reflect official Australian policy or the views of mainstream Australia.

Meanwhile, a High Commission spokesman said there have been inquiries from parents who intend to send their children for further studies in Australia on the situation in the country.

The spokesman said parents have been reassured that what happened recently is an exception.

It is learnt that the number of student visa applications increased by 15.7 per cent between July and December this year compared to the same period last year.

"We are very gratified that Malaysians remain attracted to go to Australia either as students or tourists," said the spokesman.

On Victoria Premier Jeff Kennet's offer to investigate the incident involving Adrina, the spokesman said the High Commission has no knowledge of the offer but added that any such move would come directly from Victoria.

Kennett was quoted in today's newspapers as saying that he would write to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad offering to investigate the incident. -- BERNAMA

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