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Labour-wives

GOV'T MAY LET FOREIGN WIVES WORK

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 2 (Bernama) -- The government is willing to study a proposal that foreign women who married Malaysians be allowed to join the workforce if they have the required qualifications, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Megat Junid Megat Ayob said today.

However, it was not the government's policy to let foreign men who married Malaysians to enter the local labour market as the normal practice was for wives to follow husbands, he said.

He was responding to calls that foreign women who married Malaysians be allowed to work in the country to help ease the worker shortage.

Speaking to reporters after attending a gathering at the Immigration Department headquarters here, Megat Junid said the increase in levy on immigrant workers, which came into effect yesterday, was part of efforts to reduce dependence on foreign labour.

He said the country's security could be compromised if the entry of foreign workers was not checked.

"Because of this Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants to lure retirees, whose number increases by about 11,600 each year, to rejoin the workforce," he said.

On a proposal that the retirement age of government servants be extended from 55 to 60, he said this was not feasible as not all workers were hardworking.

Megat Junid also said the department would clear the outstanding 2,271 applications for the recruitment of foreigners to work as domestic maids within the next two weeks.

Of the number, 861 applications are in Selangor, 768 in the Federal Territory, 177 in Pulau Pinang, 161 in Johor and the rest in Perak, Pahang, Perlis, Kedah, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan and Terengganu.

The department took over the task of processing the applications from the Foreign Workers Task Force yesterday.

State immigration departments could process the applications but doubtful cases should be referred to the headquarters, he said.

In his speech, Megat Junid urged immigration staff to facilitate the entry of tourists and investors to help generate more revenue for the country. -- Bernama