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Anwar-Diseases

GOVT CONCERN OVER FOREIGN WORKERS BRINGING IN COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

KAJANG, Sept 17 (Bernama) -- The Government is concerned over the contagious diseases being brought in by foreign workers working in the country as those who entered Malaysia legally are also found to be carriers of the ailments, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today.

"The procedures are there but we need to study the entry of foreign workers and where necessary, we have to reduce," he told reporters after opening the 520-unit low-cost apartments owned by Malaysian Resources Corporation Berhad (MRCB) in Kajang Utama, here.

He said foreign workers were being hired according to the stipulated procedures and under tight conditions, nevertheless there had been numerous complaints that the conditions were not adhere to and manipulated.

He said he had reported the matter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Cabinet.

He hoped the new Home Ministry secretary-general Datuk Shamsudin Osman would take appropriate measures to rectify the situation.

"Every foreign worker who enters Malaysia is required to undergo a special medical check-up first but if it is done haphazardly without proper monitoring, definitely it will create problems," he said.

Anwar said the procedure requiring every foreign worker to pass the medical examination must be enforced but "the problem with our people is, they don't enforce the existing procedures effectively for certain reasons".

Hence, the Foreign Workers' Task Force must act fast to look into the matter and inform the cabinet if they faced staff shortage to carry out the task.

"Those entering legally are also causing problems, that's why I said before big companies recruit foreign workers directly and they will be held responsible if the workers are found to be carriers of communicable diseases," he said.

"But there are still complaints of certain people bringing in foreign workers through agents by paying a certain fee even though I have reported the matter to the cabinet. The cabinet has barred such recruitment and issued a directive to rectify it," he said.

Commenting on reports that two candidates vying for the Umno Youth leader's post may not be able to contest in next month's party polls, Anwar, who is Umno deputy president and disciplinary committee chairman, said the matter had only surfaced now following objections raised.

The matter would be discussed after the weekly cabinet meeting tomorrow.

In his speech, Anwar said Malaysia had the potential to be a model of an exemplary nation where people in urban and rural areas have a place in society.

He said the government was championing the cause of the poor by providing them with affordable houses.

This unique task could be jointly carried out by big and small developers by displaying a healthy corporate culture and not by being greedy and merely chasing for huge profits, he said.

"I cannot bear to see the people's housing woes persisting. The private sector should continue their responsibility to the people as scarcity of land cannot be made an excuse anymore," he said.

"I know that I am being criticised for frequently raising the low-cost

housing problem particularly building houses for the hardcore poor to the extent that some groups claim that I am trying to revive socialism," he said.

He said it was pointless to neglect the wellbeing of the poor particularly in fulfilling their housing needs while bungalows were sprouting in big towns like Kuala Lumpur and other places in Selangor.

Anwar said he was confident the public low-cost housing problem could be resolved amicably with the involvement of the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), Bank Negara and Petronas.

He thanked Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Muhiyiddin Yusuf for his special attention on low-cost housing and close monitoring at federal-level by Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh.

He said he appreciated the gesture of several big developers who wrote in to him expressing their readiness to develop more low-cost housing projects.

"However, I hope these big developers will be more serious in their responsibilities so that the government's problems in providing houses to the people will not be shouldered by the government alone," he said.

At the function, MRCB chairman Datuk Khalid Ahmad presented a cheque for RM20,000 to Anwar who handed it over to Kajang Utama Rukun Tetangga unit head Abu Bakar Alias. -- BERNAMA

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