

19 JUL 1996

New Zealand-scheme

M'SIA-NZ EXCHANGE YOUTH PROGRAMME A HIT

KUALA LUMPUR, July 19 (Bernama) -- The Malaysia-New Zealand youth exchange programme known as the "Working Holiday Scheme" has received strong response from Malaysians.

New Zealand Deputy High Commissioner David Taylor said today there had been a large number of queries from Malaysians about the programme since it was introduced this year.

Describing the scheme as "an exciting new initiative", he said most of the queries were from university students such as from Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak who wanted details about the programme.

In an interview with Bernama, Taylor said a Malaysian woman left for New Zealand in mid-April under the scheme and he expected more to follow suit especially during the holiday season between late November and February next year.

The scheme was introduced through a memorandum of understanding signed between Malaysia and New Zealand on March 26 during Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's four-day official visit to New Zealand.

The agreement provides for young Malaysians and New Zealanders between the ages of 18 and 30 to holiday in each other's country for up to six months and while there, to engage in employment to supplement their travel expenses.

Under the programme which was mooted by New Zealand Prime Minister Jim Bolger when he visited Malaysia in 1994, a maximum of 100 work visas each will be granted by Malaysia and New Zealand for the first year.

The work visa will be valid for a period of three months from the date of issue for a stay of no more than six months from the date of the entry.

Apart from the age limit, other criteria for the work visa are that the applicant must not be accompanied by children, must possess a return travel ticket and reasonable funds of at least NZ\$2,250 in cash, travellers' cheques or bank drafts for their maintenance during their stay.

Taylor said the high commission was seeking the assistance of the Malaysia-New Zealand Business Council to help secure employment for the interested Malaysians.

"In this way it will encourage more Malaysians to take part in the scheme as they will be able to get a job and at the same time supplement their stay there," he said.

He said the onus was on the individual to find a job and the high commission could only provide them the guidance and encouragement.

Taylor said he was not aware of the response from New Zealanders towards the scheme "but I was told that there have been queries".

Taylor said New Zealand had similar programmes with Japan and Canada "and it (the programme) has been very popular".

"We think it is an exciting opportunity to learn more about the culture, style of life and business (ethics of the two countries). It will benefit the two countries... And no doubt all participants will have fun," he said.

Taylor said more publicity was needed before the scheme was able to attract many more young Malaysians.

He is very hopeful that the first year will see many Malaysians in New Zealand under the scheme. -- BERNAMA

ES JK

