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NSC-Workers (News Focus)

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL TO DISCUSS IMMIGRANT WORKER PROBLEM

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 16 (Bernama) -- When the National Security Council (NSC) meets tomorrow, the issue of foreign workers creating a host of social problems in the country will feature prominently on the agenda.

Statistics show that there are 1.5 million foreigners working legally in the country but this number is matched by those who entered the country illegally to work.

Initially the country had to grapple with illegal entries by foreigners, only to be followed by the problem of communicable diseases and, lately, the issue of immigrant workers marrying locals out of convenience.

"From before I have reminded the people of the social problem that will beset this country if we are too dependent on foreign workers. At that time there was no problem yet but it has become a problem now," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting last Oct 4.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said the Supreme Council viewed seriously the social problems created by the entry of foreign workers, and he, as the NSC chairman, would raise the matter at the meeting.

He said the NSC would discuss the possibility of reducing the recruitment of foreign workers, especially Bangladeshis.

At the recent Umno General Assembly, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the country still needed foreign workers to meet its labour requirements in several sectors.

When winding up the debate on the final day of the assembly on Oct 12, Anwar, who is Umno deputy president, said the government was aware of the social problems that had arisen and would take specific actions to overcome them.

"Existing workers should be given training and people who are lazy to work should be encouraged to work," he said when commenting on the attitude of some local people whose tendency to choose jobs had resulted in work shunned by them falling into the hands of foreigners.

Deputy Home Minister Datuk Megat Junid Megat Ayob said Malaysia only needed foreign workers who abided by the set conditions like not marrying the locals.

"We pick only those who are prepared to work hard, who come here to make a living, to have some property and who are healthy. Those who don't abide by our conditions have to be sent back," he said in the "Dari Hati ke Hati" programme over TV3 this morning.

He said Malaysia would not have any problem looking for other foreign workers because there were many waiting for a chance to work in this country.

On the government's ban on non-professional foreign workers marrying the locals, he said: "No doubt, finding one's match is in God's hands but the problem is that we have told all the foreign workers given the work permits that they cannot marry and they signed the agreement."

"So when they do something that contravenes what they have agreed to, we have to act to cancel their permits," he said.

However, he gave an assurance that the council would consider all factors before making any decision on the future of foreign workers in this country. -- BERNAMA

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