

25 AUG 1999

Mahathir-Habibie

MALAYSIA TO BRING IN SEMI-SKILLED AND SKILLED INDONESIANS

PUTRAJAYA, Aug 25 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has reached agreement with Indonesia to bring in semi-skilled and skilled Indonesian workers in addition to the unskilled ones.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that both countries also agreed that the entry of these workers be made in a more organised manner.

"In future, we will make efforts to ensure that those who come here are not only unskilled workers but semi-skilled and skilled ones as well," he said at a joint news conference with Indonesian President B.J. Habibie at the end of a delegation meeting between the two countries at the Prime Minister's Department here.

Malaysia is reported to have almost one million Indonesian workers, mostly unskilled.

The problem of foreign workers was among the topics discussed by the two countries in conjunction with Habibie's one-day working visit which was aimed at enhancing bilateral ties and cooperation.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia and Indonesia also agreed to cooperate on various issues.

The cooperation will cover efforts to overcome the haze problem affecting the two countries.

Habibie led an 80-member delegation which included several Cabinet ministers and senior government officers.

This is Habibie's second visit to Malaysia as president, having attended the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum meeting in Kuala Lumpur last November.

Today's meeting was a follow-up to their meeting on Batam island last May.

Meanwhile, Habibie said Indonesia wanted to step up cooperation with Malaysia in all fields, including culture, economy and technology.

He said the meeting was "very efficient" and proceeded well.

"Malaysia and Indonesia share a lot of similarities, and we have consulted each other on bilateral and multilateral issues within Asean as well as APEC," he said.

-- BERNAMA

AFY YBY