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Abdullah-Asean

SET JOINT PROGRAMMES TO ENHANCE WORKERS' SKILLS, SAYS DPM

KUALA LUMPUR, May 10 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi hopes that the Asean Labour Ministers Meeting here can work out and cooperate in programmes to provide skills training to their workers in facing the challenges of globalisation.

He said Malaysia was willing to work together with the other Asean countries to ensure that the objective was met.

"I think maybe some countries have specialized institutes for the training of the workforce of certain levels and certain skills," he told a news conference after opening the 15th Asean Labour Ministers Meeting (ALMM) today.

Abdullah said that cooperation among Asean countries was most vital as they would have to face the challenges of globalisation and companies in the member countries would need to further enhance their capacity and competitiveness.

Abdullah said Malaysia was aware of the different levels of education, training and the standard of skills possessed by the workers but he was confident that Asean could work it out together and help one another.

On the forced labour issue in Myanmar, he said the Asean countries and their partners always work on consensus.

"We will see how it emerge later on," he said when asked on Malaysia's position regarding the issue over which Myanmar has been criticised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

On the impact of the closing down of factories due to the economic slowdown in the United States, Abdullah said he was happy that the companies retrenching workers were willing to help the Human Resources Ministry to look for new jobs for the affected workers.

Abdullah said the retrenched workers were able to find new employment because the demand was still high for workers in Malaysia apart from measures which had been taken by the government to ensure that foreigners would be the first to go.

He said that previously, the manufacturing sector was expanding and therefore a large number of foreign workers had been hired but Malaysia cannot depend on these workers forever.

"We must try to reduce them...one way of doing it is to tell the foreign investors to go for capital-intensive and high tech industries. Then we'll no longer be labour-intensive," he said.

He said to achieve the target, Malaysia was taking steps to ensure its workers were highly trained.

Abdullah also said he was happy over the decision of the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) to call off its nationwide picket planned for Saturday.

"I believe they (MTUC) have been convinced over measures which can be taken by the government to assist in resolving the various issues," he said.

Yesterday, the MTUC decided to defer the picket for three months following an assurance given by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to consider three of seven issues it has raised.

They are on the insurance annuity scheme, the death and disability payment and the management of the EPF funds.

-- BERNAMA

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