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Conflicting reports over visit by Megawati

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Indonesian officials today gave conflicting reports over the proposed arrival of top-level delegations from Jakarta following the Malaysian Government's decision to hire Indonesians only as a last resort.

Indonesian Consul-General Erman Hidayat said in Penang President Megawati Sukarnoputri will visit Malaysia to discuss the matter with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said the proposed meeting was important because the riot by about 500 Indonesian factory workers in Nilai, Negri Sembilan recently "did not reflect the true behaviour of Indonesians."

"I hope the Malaysian Government will reconsider its decision to suspend the hiring of Indonesians," he said during a ceremony to commemorate the arrival of the cargo vessel, MV Marisa, from Aceh, at the Swettenham Pier.

The event marked the resumption of the Penang-Aceh barter trading, which had been suspended since 1995.

A 35-member delegation from Indonesia led by North Aceh District Officer Tarmizi Karim was present at the ceremony.

Also present were Penang Port Commission general manager Captain Abdul Rahim Abdul Aziz, Penang Port Sdn Bhd senior general manager Naina Merican and Malaysian Malay Businessmen and Industrialists' Association president Waris Ali Abdul Carrim.

A Bernama report from Jakarta said Indonesian Vice-President Hamzah Haz was planning a visit to Malaysia to meet Dr Mahathir.

The head of the National Council of the Federation of Independent Indonesian Workers Union (Gaspermindo) Jumhur Hidayat said Hamzah would visit Malaysia to discuss the issue as the move would affect thousands of Indonesian workers wishing to seek employment here.

Jumhur said it was necessary for Hamzah to proceed with his plan as the case needed intervention at the highest level.

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