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Envoy 'not aware' of apology from Jakarta for citizens' misconduct

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Indonesian ambassador here today denied knowledge of an apology which his government was reported to have made to Kuala Lumpur for the conduct of its citizens.

"I have just been given the news article ... I have no knowledge of the apology," Hadi Wayarabi Alhadar told a Press conference at the Indonesian Embassy this morning.

Hadi also could not confirm news reports that his Government had sent two officials here to convey the apology and help solve recurring problems involving Indonesian workers.

Indonesian Manpower Minister Jacob Nuwa Wea was reported as saying today that a director from the ministry and a former labour attache had been sent to Kuala Lumpur.

The report from Jakarta also quoted Nuwa Wea as saying that the Indonesian Government would provide assistance to any Indonesian worker facing legal action in Malaysia.

The junior minister was also reported to have urged Kuala Lumpur not to act indiscriminately against Indonesian workers.

Wisma Putra officials could not be reached for comment but it was learnt that the Malaysian Government was not happy with the remarks from Jakarta.

"Nuwa Wea's remarks urging Malaysia not to act indiscriminately against Indonesian workers here do not go down well, diplomatically or otherwise.

"We have never acted indiscriminately against them. In fact we are giving them ample opportunity to work and live peacefully," a Home Ministry official said, on condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, Hadi gave an undertaking at the Press conference that the remaining 700,000 Indonesian workers in Malaysia would be closely monitored through regular meetings with employers.

He said officials from the embassy would also visit workplaces and conduct briefings.

He said officials from the Indonesian Consul General offices in Johor Baru, Penang and Kota Kinabalu would also keep tabs on the workers.

"I regret what happened in Nilai and Kampung Limau Manis ... it should not have happened because the Malaysian people and the Government have been very accommodating.

"We have taken the necessary steps including adopting a more stringent worker recruitment process back home and an awareness programme for those who are already here."

He said Indonesian workers should abide by the laws of the country and not indulge in activities which could hurt bilateral ties.

The ambassador has also held meetings with Foreign Ministry secretary-general Datuk Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak and Home Ministry secretary-general Datuk Seri Aseh Che Mat.

Asked about the Indonesian Government's view of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's warning that Indonesian workers would be the last choice for employment, Hadi said it was the right of the Malaysian Government.

"I cannot interfere in this but there are other diplomatic channels where the issue could be discussed," he said, citing the Malaysia-Indonesia joint commission meeting next month which will be attended by the Foreign Ministers of both countries.

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