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Syed Hamid-Critic

MALAYSIA TREATS FOREIGN WORKERS WELL, SAYS SYED HAMID

DENPASAR (BALI), Aug 7 (Bernama) -- Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today he does not understand why Malaysia has always been criticised by Indonesia's media and labour organisations whenever it takes firm actions to resolve the problem of illegal workers from the republic.

"Malaysia has been very just and fair when it comes to treating foreign workers and no other countries have treated foreign workers as well as we have," he told Malaysian reporters here.

He said Malaysia had always welcomed foreign workers provided they came through a proper channel and had valid documents.

Syed Hamid said the Malaysian government had given a lot of opportunities to the illegal workers including the recent amnesty programme.

"I don't understand why there are cynical reports criticising Malaysia's move to send home the workers although it is a humane effort," he said.

Syed Hamid was commenting on reports in the Indonesian media which questioned Malaysia's move to repatriate Indonesian workers.

"We also need to look after the interests of our own people," he said.

When asked whether such reports would affect Malaysia-Indonesia ties, Syed Hamid said both countries enjoyed close relationship due to their proximity, and economic and political reasons.

He said whatever step taken towards economic recovery by the Indonesian administration would benefit Malaysia as Kuala Lumpur was currently the biggest investor in the republic.

Syed Hamid said the issue of Malaysian investments in Indonesia would be discussed during the meeting of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Indonesian counterpart Presiden Megawati Sukarnoputri.

"We need to raise the issue as we have more than RM1 billion investment in Indonesia and it covers many sectors including agriculture," he said.

On the meeting of both leaders, Syed Hamid said it is more of an annual consultation to show that bilateral relation between Malaysia and Indonesia is good although there was a change in leadership in Indonesia.

He said both leaders would witness the signing of several Memorandums of Understanding.

The MoUs to be signed by both parties include the issues of repatriating the illegal Indonesian workers, women and family development and the agreement between Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand regarding the control over the price of rubber.

Dr Mahathir would also launch the Malaysia-Indonesia Business Council (PERMAI), and the natural gas project from Pulau Natuna to Pulau Duyong in Terengganu.

-- BERNAMA

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