

04 FEB 2002

Indon-Team

PARLIAMENTARY TEAM VISITS M'SIA OVER WORKERS ISSUE

JAKARTA, Feb 4 (Bernama) -- A five-member team of Indonesian parliamentarians flew to Kuala Lumpur this afternoon to appeal to the Malaysian government to relax its decision to reduce the number of Indonesian workers in the country.

The team, led by a Deputy Speaker of the People's Representatives Assembly, Muhaimin Iskandar, comprises Sabam Sirait who is also head of the Inter-Parliamentary Committee, Bachrum Rasir, Happy Bone Zulkarnain and Posma Lumban Tobing.

Muhaimin, who is responsible for parliamentary affairs on the people's welfare, told reporters before leaving for the Malaysian capital that during the two-day visit the team would hold discussion with Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar.

He was confident that with the close working relationship between the parliaments of the two neighbouring countries, an amicable solution to the problem could be reached.

Indonesia had been worried by Malaysia's drastic action in deporting thousands of its workers as this could put pressure on unemployment at home where almost 40 million people are already without jobs.

The move was prompted by a series of criminal incidents involving Indonesian workers, the latest being the violent riot at a textile factory hostel in Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, and the fight among themselves in Cyberjaya.

Indonesia has not only apologised for the rampage but also appealed to Malaysia to continue giving Indonesia priority in its recruitment of foreign workers.

Displaying concern over the issue, President Megawati Sukarnoputri last Friday sent Justice and Human Rights Minister Yusril Ihza Mahendra as her emissary to discuss matters affecting Indonesians workers.

Yusril, who met briefly with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, was quoted by the Indonesian dailies as saying that Malaysia would only deport illegal Indonesian migrant workers and retain those with work permits.

-- BERNAMA

OPP JK