

08 JAN 2004

Abdullah-Workers

M'SIA AND INDON TO SIGN MoU ON INDON WORKER RECRUITMENT SOON

By: Openg Onn

JAKARTA, Jan 8 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today that Malaysia and Indonesia have decided to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on the recruitment of Indonesian workers soon as it has been delayed for some time due to various factors.

He said that the MoU was vital to arrange for worker recruitment and address problems that could arise pertaining to the issue of Indonesian workers who were required by Malaysia.

"There are still some unresolved matters which I need not explain here. I hope they'll be dealt with soon," he told a joint media conference with Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri.

Abdullah was on a one-day visit to Indonesia, his first official visit to an Asean country since taking over from Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Oct 31 last year.

Earlier, he was accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar in his traditional call on Megawati at Istana Negara here. This was followed by a bilateral discussion.

Among the vital points in the MoU is that the recruitment of Indonesian workers should be through employment agencies in Indonesia instead of directly as preferred by employers in Malaysia.

Apart from that, the Malaysian employers could have custody of the passports of the workers to ensure that they serve their contract and to provide another document of identity recognised by the Malaysian government in the event that they need to conduct transactions not related to their employment.

Thousands of Indonesian workers are seeking their livelihood in Malaysia especially in the construction and plantation sectors due to lack of jobs in the country.

Some of them enter Malaysia illegally and the Malaysian government has been conducting large-scale operations to deport the illegal workers who are required to obtain valid documents to be able to work in Malaysia.

Abdullah said that he and Megawati also agreed to hold annual consultation between the leaders of both countries and proposed that the Malaysia-Indonesia joint commission conduct scheduled meetings.

"This is to ensure that there are no postponements and eventually neglected to be held. If there is a fixed schedule, this will not happen," he said.

Abdullah and Megawati regarded the annual consultation and joint commission as essential mechanisms to implement and seek feedback on the implementation of programmes planned by both countries.

Abdullah also said that he wish to see Indonesians continue to invest in Malaysia in the fields of trade and commerce.

"We will continue to hold discussions to expedite the proposed bilateral payment agreement in an effort to encourage investment," he said.

Meanwhile, Megawati said in her statement that at the meeting, the two leaders expressed determination to resolve problems pertaining to both land and maritime issues especially those affecting the Sarawak-Kalimantan region.

In this respect, she said, they shared the view on the maritime issue which should be based on the principle that land reclamation along the coastline should not affect the maritime border of the two countries.

She said that they were also determined to tackle piracy especially in

the Straits of Melaka to ensure a greater volume of trade and to curb smuggling of timber, people and weapons.

Megawati also said that they agree to draw up a policy and framework on human resources and cooperate in the field of oil and gas.

They also discussed a proposed project to be undertaken by Petronas and Pertamina.

The Indonesian president said that their discussions included regional and international issues of mutual interest besides bilateral issues.

"We also reaffirmed our commitment to intensify efforts to curb international terrorism," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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