

Registration exercise for illegal workers
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The government will offer six months of amnesty to the large numbers of illegal foreigners in the country.

Deputy Minister Muhyiddin Yassin (right) said today the Immigration Department will conduct a registration exercise from July 11, under which employers will be encouraged to register their workers.

The exercise, called Programme 6P, is expected to be conducted for six months.

Legally there are 1.9million foreigners in the country, but the number of immigrants are unaccounted, Muhyiddin said.

The government had agreed to 48 suggestions from a lab on managing foreigners that was held last year, said Muhyiddin.

Besides identifying the total number of immigrants, the government also intends to have their information recorded in the home ministry's biometric system.

"We also don't have the record on their exact number... because of that, many things arise like social, crime and economic issues," he said after chairing a special cabinet meeting on foreign workers and illegal immigrants.

"This is the basis on why we are doing this because after this exercise we can streamline our records in order to reduce the foreign workers in the country," he said.

For those who are already employed, the government will consider issuing temporary work permits so that the process does not hamper their work.

"So the registration process will be done in the first two weeks. They are encouraged to come out...we ask the employers to be involved actively because this is under amnesty, therefore, no legal repercussions," he said.

Immigrants could work in local sector

Muhyiddin added that the government expects ministries to get feedback from industries and relevant sectors on the quantity of labour needed.

After that, he said, the registered foreigners will be given an opportunity to fill the vacancies in the event that locals are not interested in applying for the available jobs.

However, he did not explain what will happen if there is an excess number of immigrants.

Asked on the matter, the deputy prime minister said the issue of job placement will be dealt with after the registration process is complete.

"We have to really establish the need basis but before we do that, let us allow them to come out and register themselves because we will not take action against them, otherwise they will be prosecuted under the Immigration law," he repeated.

Muhyiddin declined to state the cost of the exercise.

It also has not been decided if those who register after the six-month deadline will be sent back to their respective countries.

"We will take (it) into account. The normal regulations under the Immigration law will be enforced after that," he said.

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