

M'sia welcomes second group of Syrian migrants
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The Malaysian government today welcomed the arrival of 68 Syrian migrants from 18 families who would be temporarily resettled in the country.

The group aged between seven months and 74 years-old arrived on an AirAsia flight from Beirut, Lebanon, at the Royal Malaysian Air Force Base in Subang at about 11.20am this morning.

Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi was among those present to meet them, together with Women, Community and Family Development Minister Rohani Abdul Karim.

Zahid told a press conference the group is the second batch of Syrian migrants to arrive here, as part of the government's commitment to resettle 3,000 Syrians caught in an internal strife.

"They are internally displaced persons from the Bekaa Valley camp in Beirut, Lebanon, who have passed the security and health screenings by the Malaysian Syrian migrant placement taskforce.

"This taskforce was set-up to facilitate the placement of Syrian migrants from 2015 to the end of 2018," he said, adding the current group comprises professionals including engineers and lecturers.

"With the help of NGOs, those who are qualified to work can be issued with temporary work permits, and students will also be assisted to further their education," he said.

The government, he said, has allocated RM2 million for the programme, also supported by NGOs and 11 private companies.

Total 500 expected

By the end of this year, Zahid added that the government is expecting arrival of two more groups, bringing their number to about 500 Syrian migrants here.

Earlier in his speech, Zahid stressed that the government is highly concerned over the situation in Syria and other countries facing internal conflicts.

"In the past we (Malaysia) helped out friends from Bosnia, and when the situation there had recovered, we provided them with the opportunity to return home," he said.

Zahid spoke in English and it was translated into Arabic for benefit of the Syrian migrants.

Zahid also started off his speech in Arabic, wishing the Syrian migrants a pleasant stay in Malaysia

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak first announced Malaysia's commitment to resettle 3,000 Syrian refugees at the 70th United Nations Summit last year.

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