

New deal: Indonesian workers to get day off
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Najib Abdul Razak said today that the seventh annual consultation between the top leaders of Malaysia and Indonesia today had produced several inspiring decisions, showing that the close ties between the two nations are flourishing.

The prime minister said several issues were discussed and agreements reached, including the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on manpower, during his four-eye meeting with Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

"Only one MoU was signed relating to manpower... among others, it requires Malaysian employers to give their Indonesian workers a day off a week.

"However, if both sides agree, and the worker does not want to take the day off, he or she will be paid commensurate with the salary," he told a media conference after the 90-minute meeting at his office in Putrajaya.

The MoU also stipulates that the worker should retain his or her passport unless both parties agree that it be kept by the employer.

Najib said, however, that both countries would continue to discuss the issue of minimum wage.

Asked whether the achievement would mean that Indonesia would soon lift the moratorium on sending Indonesian maids to Malaysia, Najib said:

"We did not say so categorically, but I assume that it will be lifted soon with respect to that. Because they have a different system in Indonesia and we have a different system here, it complicates matters with respect to wages paid to our workers here. It requires more discussion.

"We will get this confirmed but I don't think that will be a major problem," he said.

Susilo arrived today for the consultation. He will also speak at the World International Economic Forum at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre tomorrow.

Najib said that in the spirit of cooperation, Malaysia also agreed to Indonesia's request to increase the number of Indonesian teachers teaching the children of Indonesian workers in Sabah but he did not mention the number.

The Malaysian government had earlier given the nod for Indonesia to send its teachers to teach the children of plantation workers in Sabah at learning centres, especially those in the interior areas where there are many Indonesian workers.

For the increase, employers, especially private sector employers, would provide appropriate space for the children of their plantation workers to be taught by Indonesian teachers in their own curriculum, he said, adding that these places need not be special buildings for schools.

Najib said they also agreed to fund the exchange of trainees or officers pursuing training or studies at the defence universities in Malaysia and Indonesia.

- Bernama

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