

Minister wants review of foreign worker policy
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A Malaysian junior minister yesterday called for a review of the country's foreign worker recruitment policies, citing what he said were large numbers of foreigners in jail.

Deputy Internal Security Minister Fu Ah Kiow said 34 percent of 35,000 people in prisons were foreigners who were either convicted criminals or in remand awaiting court verdicts, the Bernama news agency reported.

"The situation is very serious. The big number of foreigners in prisons are not only a burden to government expenditure but also cause overcrowding in prisons," Fu was quoted as saying.

Malaysia is one of Asia's largest recruiters of foreign labour, with foreign workers both legal and illegal accounting for about 2.6 million of its 10.5 million workforce.

The minister's comments follow a proposal by the Home Ministry for new legislation which places foreign workers under constant monitoring to prevent rising crime.

Minister: Too many foreigners

Police chief, Musa Hassan, has also reportedly suggested confining foreigners to their work premises and putting them under 24-hour surveillance to prevent crime.

"If the proposal is implemented, it does not mean we are restricting their freedom of movement. Our intention is to see Malaysians living peacefully without problems caused by foreigners," said Fu of the police proposal.

"A lot of complaints have been received with the presence of too many foreigners in the country," he added.

Foreign workers, the majority from Indonesia, supply a much needed workforce in Malaysia's agricultural, construction, manufacturing and services sectors, but have been widely blamed for crime and social ills.

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