

UN refugee agency should set up camps: Radzi
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The UN refugee agency should set up camps to handle more than 100,000 refugees already in Malaysia, Home Affairs Minister Mohammed Radzi Sheikh Ahmad said today.

Radzi said his country was hosting about 105,000 refugees from Burma, Indonesia's Aceh province, and from the Philippines.

"If the UNHCR here had their own camps, they provide shelter, funding... and promise to repatriate the refugees. Then we are happy," the minister told reporters.

"They should set up their own camps," he said.

Volker Turk, head of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Malaysia, declined to comment. The agency spokeswoman could not be reached.

Malaysia is not a party to international refugee conventions, and refugees are detained as illegal migrants.

Malaysia plans to arrest up to half a million illegal foreign workers this year, the immigration enforcement director, Ishak Mohamed, said this week as officials voiced fears over immigrant criminals.

A Malaysian minister last month called for a review of foreign worker recruitment policies, citing what he said were large numbers of foreigners in jail.

Malaysia is also mulling a bill which would recommend that workers register with their employers if they wished to go out during breaks or days off, while the country's police chief reportedly suggested confining foreigners to their workplaces and putting them under 24-hour surveillance to prevent crime.

The home minister said Thursday that 1.9 million foreign workers, most of them Indonesian, were working legally in Malaysia.

"They, generally speaking, do not commit crime," he said.

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