

'One maid, one task' ruling doesn't exist, insists Putrajaya
The Malaysian Insider
March 19, 2012
By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, March 19 — Calling it a miscommunication in language, Putrajaya has insisted there is no “one maid, one task” ruling that states Indonesian maids will only perform one of four tasks at a minimum wage of RM700.

Labour Department director-general Datuk Sheikh Yahya Sheikh Mohamed pointed out that Indonesian maids were not limited to performing a specific task out of the four household tasks for which they were being trained — cooking, babysitting, taking care of the elderly and housekeeping.

File photo of Indonesian migrant workers chatting near their belongings as they wait for their documents to be processed after their arrival from Malaysia, at a special terminal for migrant workers at the Soekarno-Hatta Airport in Jakarta. — Reuters pic

The New Straits Times reported today that the government official expressed surprise at a Bernama report that said the maids would be employed to do only one of the four household tasks.

“What transpired in the meeting was entirely different from what was said,” said Sheikh Yahya, who led the delegation at the Malaysia-Indonesia Joint Task Force for Deployment, Placement and Protection of Indonesian Maids meeting on Thursday.

But, he added, he was not present when the meeting's co-chair, Indonesia's Labour Placement Development director-general Dr Reyna Usman, briefed reporters on what had transpired at the meeting.

Sheikh Yahya believed a miscommunication may have happened during Reyna's briefing, noting that Bahasa Indonesia had words which were similar to Bahasa Malaysia but held different meanings.

The director-general said he had spoken with Reyna after the uproar over the Bernama report. "She informed me that she had only briefed the reporters on what was agreed on in the meeting and did not announce anything controversial," he added.

In the meeting, the task force had agreed that the minimum wage for Indonesian maids would be set between RM600 and RM700, as determined by market forces.

It was also concluded that Indonesian maids would be trained in four skills, but each maid would focus their training toward a specific chore.

This would also hold true for Indonesian maids sent to other countries such as Hong Kong and Singapore, said Sheikh Yahya.

"A maid can be asked to do tasks other than the original task she was hired for, but employers cannot fault the maid if she does not perform as well in the other tasks.

"If you applied for a maid to do housekeeping for you, it is only fair for you to judge her based on that skill," he was quoted as saying.

The newspaper said a full report on the meeting will be submitted to Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr S. Subramaniam.

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