

Malaysia, Australia To Discuss Resolving Asylum-Seeker Problem
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By Ahmad Fuad Yahya

NUSA DUA (BALI), Oct 7 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said Monday Malaysia and Australia have agreed to further discuss the cooperation that Malaysia can extend to help overcome the problem of asylum seekers Australia faces.

The agreement was reached in the talks Najib had with his Australian counterpart Tony Abbott here Monday evening on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) 2013 summit.

"The Australian prime minister and I decided that the relevant ministers from Malaysia and Australia discuss the matter to determine how we can be of help," Najib told Malaysian journalists here.

Najib arrived here Sunday night at the head of a Malaysian delegation to the Apec 2013 summit being held here over two days beginning Monday.

He said asylum seekers posed a major problem for Australia because these boat people could be regarded as victims of human exploitation and human trafficking.

Najib said the asylum-seeker problem had resulted in adverse consequences in terms of the number of people who died on the voyages and the large sums of money paid to those involved in human trafficking.

Those involved in the activity did not give any heed to the safety of the asylum seekers as could be seen from the totally unsafe boats used, he said.

In his discussions with Abbott, Najib also illustrated the next phase of the Colombo Plan, which would be a reverse Colombo Plan.

"All along, the Colombo Plan had brought students from abroad to Australia. It will be proposed that a reverse Colombo Plan be put into practice, with students from Australia studying at institutions in Malaysia and in other countries to enable them better appreciate the culture and way of life in Malaysia and Asean," he said.

Najib also had bilateral talks with New Zealand Prime Minister John Key.

He said they discussed New Zealand's support for Malaysia to fill one of the non-permanent seats in the United Nations Security Council for the 2015-2016 term and New Zealand's desire to vie for a similar position.

"There is no conflict because Malaysia will be representing Asia and the Pacific while New Zealand is in the category of other countries, meaning New Zealand will compete with Turkey and Spain," he said.

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