

**Entry of 1.5 Million Bangladeshi Workers at Request of Business People – Ahmad Zahid  
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PUTRAJAYA, Feb 11 (Bernama) -- The bringing of 1.5 million Bangladeshi workers into the country is not because the government wanted it but at the request of industries in the sectors permitted, business associations and chambers of commerce, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also Home Minister, stressed that not all the 1.5 million were coming in one go but in stages over three to five years.

"The figure of 1.5 million Bangladeshi workers which has received wide play in the media is actually the number of those registered with the Bangladesh government for job purposes," he told a media conference here today.

Earlier, Ahmad Zahid had chaired the last meeting of the Special Cabinet Committee on Development and Management of the Malaysian Halal Industry, which was dissolved and replaced with the Malaysian Halal Council.

Ahmad Zahid said the (Bangladeshi) workers to be brought in must also meet certain conditions like they must first be trained in the sector they will be in before they are given employment.

He said the workers would also have to be given training in cross-culture to help them understand Malaysian culture as well as expose them to the country's laws and code of ethics here.

They will also be vetted for criminal activities as well as for health issues before permission to bring them in is given, he said.

He also stressed that enforcement against foreign workers, especially Bangladeshis will still be carried out to ensure those who overstayed faced action such as deportation.

Ahmad Zahid said the details of the agreement would be finalised by the Human Resource Ministry and the Bangladesh government in Dhaka on Feb 18 before being tabled to the Cabinet for approval.

Application for the import of Bangladeshi workers could done one-line by the industries concerned and submitted to the Home Ministry's Foreign Workers' Division, he said.

Ahmad Zahid also said the implementation of the new levy rates for foreign workers set for Feb 1 had been temporarily deferred until a meeting is held between the Home Ministry's Secretary-General and industry players.

"The Cabinet has decided that a meeting between the ministry's secretary-general and chambers of commerce, unions and related NGOs be held before Feb 20, and until then, the new rates are temporarily suspended," he said.

Under the new rates, there are only two categories compared to previously when they were based on various sectors, with those in the manufacturing, construction and service sectors to be charged RM2,500 per worker and those who work in the plantation and agriculture sector having to pay a levy of RM1,500 for each worker.

The decision for the introduction of the new levy rates was made following the announcement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak when presenting the the recalibrated Budget 2016 on Jan 28 on the revision of levy rates for foreign workers.

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