

## **Illegal Foreign Worker Rehiring Programme Starts Online Feb 15**

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PUTRAJAYA, Feb 5 (Bernama) -- The Rehiring Programme to enable foreign workers without permits to be given valid work permits will be implemented online beginning Feb 15, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also the Home Minister, said the programme would be initially implemented for three months and was expected to benefit about two million workers without valid work permits.

The programme would safeguard these workers from being cheated by unscrupulous foreign worker agents who undertake such registration, he told reporters after addressing the monthly assembly at the Home Ministry here.

"Some employers who went through agents previously found that their workers were not registered after they had paid the fees.

"This (online programme) can also prevent cases of employers not paying the levy for their workers," he said.

Ahmad Zahid said the programme would be continued if there was good response from employers and the foreign workers without permits.

When announcing a recalibrated Budget 2016 on Jan 28, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak had disclosed the Rehiring Programme, saying it was to fulfil industry demand as well as to enable the government to ascertain the number of foreign workers without permits in the country for the purpose of security monitoring.

Ahmad Zahid also said that the Home Ministry would meet employers after the Chinese New Year to discuss the implementation of the new rates of levy for foreign workers.

The government had taken note of the complaints and criticism of the employers in this regard, and would use the meeting to obtain feedback and finetune the implementation of the higher levy, he said.

Ahmad Zahid said Najib had contacted him on the matter while he (Ahmad Zahid) was in Beijing on a recent visit and wanted him to relook the rates of levy as well as the period of implementation.

Najib had announced on Jan 28 that the government would streamline the management of the foreign workers system whereby the levy would be clustered into two categories only, namely manufacturing, construction and services sector and plantation and agriculture sector.

The new rates of levy, RM2,500 in the manufacturing, construction and services sector and RM1,500 in the plantation and agriculture sector, came into effect on Feb 1.

The old rates were RM1,250 (RM1,010 in Sabah and Sarawak) in the manufacturing and construction sectors, RM1,850 (RM1,490) in the services sector, RM590 in the plantation sector and RM410 in the agriculture sector.

The levy for foreign domestic workers remains at RM410.

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