

**Perkasa wants Malay-speaking migrant workers**  
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Migrant workers need to obtain a Bahasa Malaysia language proficiency certificate before they are allowed to work in the country, says Perkasa, in criticising Putrajaya's decision to bring in 1.5 million Bangladeshi workers.

The Malay rights group's president Datuk Ibrahim Ali said in other countries, migrant workers were only allowed to work if they had passed a proficiency test of the country's national language.

"From hotel to the food stalls, everyone is hiring migrant workers. What is so sad is that many of them do not know the mother tongue of the country.

"Supposedly, they should get a national language proficiency certificate before they can work in Malaysia," he said in a statement today.

Ibrahim also said the recent approval to bring in the Bangladeshi workers would affect Malaysians.

"How about the locals? Unemployment rate continues to increase. The government must have a clear and stern policy."

Bangladesh daily Dhaka Tribune said workers from the country would come to Malaysia under the G2G (government-to-government) Plus scheme, which allows them employment in construction, service, manufacturing and agriculture sectors.

Previously, Bangladeshi workers were only hired for plantations.

News portal bdnews24.com meanwhile quoted Bangladesh's cabinet secretary Mohammad Shafiul Alam as saying a memorandum of understanding (MoU) would likely be signed within a month.

"It is a major achievement of Bangladesh that Malaysia has listed us as a source country [from which to recruit manpower]," he was quoted as saying.

Earlier this year, trade groups expressed concern over the plan, warning that it could be backed by profiteering rather than market demand.

The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) and the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) said the billion-ringgit foreign labour supplier industry could be influencing the so-called demand for the 1.5 million workers.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, however, said the workers would be recruited in stages, and that they were needed in the plantation sector.

He said their numbers would be tweaked and distributed to other sectors, including manufacturing and construction.

Should the deal be signed, bdnews24.com said, the cost of sending a worker would be 34,000-37,000 takas (RM1,810-RM1,970).

Dhaka Tribune reported it would cost 60,000 takas for migration through private recruiters.

According to bdnews24.com, there are currently about 600,000 Bangladeshis working in Malaysia.

Shafiul told Dhaka Tribune there would be no middlemen involved.

He did not say how much the workers would be paid, but told journalists that their wages would be deposited directly into their bank accounts.

Critics of Putrajaya's labour policies say manpower suppliers were gearing up to make a tidy profit from the 1.5 million Bangladeshis, and that the plan to bring in the workers was related to the retrenchment of locals in 2015, a trend expected to continue this year.

Ibrahim said the news to bring in 1.5 million Bangladeshi workers was in itself a crazy decision.

"In truth, Malaysia is lacking workers in development and economic sectors. But the issue here... is it reasonable to bring in 1.5 million Bangladeshi? Is the number really needed for the purpose of quota like selling the logging area before trees were even planted?"

He added that there were also other implications from the plan.

"Safety issue and other complications will arise and just imagine with the number of migrants that are already here, whether through legal or illegal means."

Ibrahim urged Putrajaya to postpone the decision, conduct a study and gather the feedback from other parties before going ahead with the plan.

"Maybe the policy paper is ready and already amended for approval... but this is a big issue that could give impact to the country in the future."

He advised Putrajaya not to take a shortcut in decision-making.

"There are plenty of decisions before this which were said to be good but had failed in the end and continue failing. Dear leaders of Malaysia, please learn from past mistakes and experience... postpone it first," he said. – February 10, 2016.

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