

Malaysia Has Become Destination Country for Human Trafficking – Zahid

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By Azeman Ariffin

BALI, March 22 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has become a destination country for human trafficking following the rapid development and the many job opportunities available in the country.

However, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the government had taken immediate action to rectify the situation as it could lead to domestic crimes involving foreigners.

He said the Malaysian government was very committed to combating human trafficking and would also call on other countries to do the same at the ongoing Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process) here.

Ahmad Zahid said Malaysia used to be a transit country for human trafficking, but now illegal immigrants were now keen on entering the country and deliberately destroying their identification and travel documents to hide their identities and nationalities.

"Malaysia used to be a transit country for foreigners traveling to Australia and other countries, but now they have turned Malaysia into their final destination country due to the available job opportunities," he told the Malaysian media here on Tuesday.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also Home Minister, said among the key problems faced in combating human trafficking crime was when the source country refused to recognised the victims as its nationals due to the absence of identification documents.

He said such problems would be discussed by ASEAN member countries and 44 other countries involved in the Bali Process.

"We see some kind of inequality in terms of taking responsibilities. Some source countries are seen to have washed their hands when their nationals left for other countries for good, either to earn a living or just to escape for economic or political reasons," he said.

As such, he said the source countries should be involved in finding solutions to the problem, so that they could ascertain the root causes underlying the people smuggling and human trafficking issues.

"We will also look into this problem from the aspects of control and protection and by seeking the cooperation from the countries involved, especially in terms of patrol at sea and land entry points," he said.

Ahmad Zahid said it was a shared responsibility for all source countries to find a method to monitor the travel documents as the human trafficking syndicates were using illegal methods to enter a country, be it via land or sea routes.

"We will also propose to the UNHCR not to just monitor and help the source countries because in

order to fight document forgery crime, it cannot be done by one party alone as it will need the cooperation from various international-level enforcement agencies," he said.

The deputy prime minister said Malaysia, however, had its own methods in identifying the nationalities of illegal immigrants even though they were using forged documents or having no documents at all.

"Some Bangladeshi nationals may claimed to be Myanmar nationals because they speak the same language or believe in the same religion, but our immigration, police and other enforcement agencies will be able to tell their nationalities," he said.

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