

**Government Does Not Bring In Foreign Workers - Zahid
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KUALA LUMPUR, June 16 (Bernama) -- The government does not bring foreign workers into the country as this is handled by companies and employers who require them, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said today.

The government only provided approval for the employment of foreign workers based on industrial needs and with strict conditions, he said.

"Do not point fingers at the government because the demand for labour is from industries and, certainly, as a concerned government we want to make it easy for employers," he said during question time in the Dewan Negara.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also Home Minister, said a study on foreign workers was being carried out by the Human Resource Ministry, the Economic Planning Unit and the relevant agencies to determine the actual number of workers needed in the country.

"The study will assist the government in deciding on the way to go in the management of foreign workers in the country," he added.

He said a National Clearing House had been set up to look into the need for foreign workers in all economic sectors.

Although the government's policy was to give priority to local workers, he said, exemptions were given to several industries and sectors like construction and plantation.

To a supplementary question, from Senator Datuk Abdul Rahman Mat Yasin, Ahmad Zahid said the current shortage of foreign workers had adversely affected several economic sectors.

He said oil palm plantation industry was suffering losses of RM2 billion a month because of the inavailability of workers to harvest the fruits, while in the furniture-making sector, at least 24 factories in Muar were forced to close due to a shortage of workers.

He also said that efforts were being taken by the ministry to curb the entry of illegal foreign workers.

He said that as of June 15 this year, 5,622 operations were conducted during which 91,075 foreign workers were checked. Of these, 27,498 did not have valid documents and were detained, he added.

He said action was taken against 662 employers and seven syndicates bringing in foreign workers were crippled.

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