

Malaysia-UNHCR Joint Task Force Formed To Tackle Migration Issue

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PUTRAJAYA, Aug 18 (Bernama) -- A Malaysia-United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Joint Task Force will be set up so that continuous cooperation can be created in the efforts to tackle the complex migration issue.

The decision was reached at a meeting to discuss UNHCR issues chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, here Thursday.

A statement issued in conjunction with the meeting said members of the Joint Task Force comprised senior officers from the Home Affairs Ministry, National Security Council, Foreign Affairs Ministry and the UNHCR.

Through the task force, the Malaysian government would cooperate with the UNHCR in the aspects of registration and issuance of UNHCR cards incorporating high security features which had already been issued from June 1.

"However, the process of determining the refugee status remained the full responsibility of UNHCR based on the UN Convention on Refugees 1951 and the 1967 Protocol," the statement said.

Last month, the Cabinet decided not to allow the UNHCR to issue UNHCR cards to individuals who had applied on a 'walk in' basis effective July 20.

According to the statement, as the issuance of the card would undergo strict screening measures, the process of replacing the old UNHCR cards would take some time.

"The move aims to tackle the problems of the issuance of forged UNHCR cards," it said.

Meanwhile, Malaysia and the UNHCR had forged collaboration for 41 years since the presence of the UNHCR office in the country beginning 1975 following the influx of applicants for political asylum from Vietnam.

"The main role of the UNHCR in Malaysia is to process applications for refugee status submitted by applicants for political asylum.

"The UNHCR is also responsible for coordinating the resettlement of refugees from third countries," it said.

The statement added that the UNHCR faced problems to speed up the process of resettlement of refugees from third countries, and in the meantime, the refugees who were in this country had been provided with UNHCR cards.

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