

## **IOM Recognises Malaysia's Role And Commitment To Help Syrian Refugees - Malaysia's DPM**

PUTRAJAYA, May 13 (Bernama) -- The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) recognises the role and commitment of Malaysia in bringing in about 3,500 Syrian refugees to the country more than a year ago without incurring high costs or being a burden to the government.

This was conveyed by IOM director-general William Lacy Swing who paid a courtesy call on Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi at his office in Perdana Putra here, Friday.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also Home Minister, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, when attending the 70th UN General Assembly in 2015, had announced that Malaysia would bring in 3,000 Syrian refugees in stages over three years in an effort to alleviate the refugee crisis in that country.

"Now, in the past year and a half, more than 3,500 Syrians, whether they are workers or students, their parents are in Malaysia with temporary documents. They will return to their country of origin after the conflict in their country ends," he told reporters after the meeting.

Ahmad Zahid said the Syrian people who were currently in Malaysia were not a burden to the government or non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

"Without spending too much or providing placement, medical and other assistance, the Syrian people in Malaysia are not a burden," he said.

IOM, which was established in 1951 to tackle issues related to migration globally, was recognised as an agency under the United Nations (UN) last year.

To appreciate Malaysia's role in addressing the issue of migration, Ahmad Zahid said, IOM had offered at least two positions to Malaysians eligible to become officers at the agency.

Ahmad Zahid said IOM had offered officers of ministries, departments, agencies, universities or NGOs to be placed on secondment at its headquarters in Geneva or at any of its 500 centres worldwide.

"The matter will be discussed with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman to finetune the criteria specified by IOM.

"For me, this is a recognition and acceptance by the international body of Malaysia's contribution to the international community," he said.

Ahmad Zahid said the IOM also wished to establish a permanent office in Malaysia.

"(IOM's) Head of Mission has not been given diplomat status. So, this matter will be discussed by the Foreign Ministry to determine the status," he said.

Regarding the cooperation between Malaysia and IOM, Ahmad Zahid said IOM would like to help Malaysia reduce the number of Myanmar nationals in the country, now estimated to be about 56,000, where most of them are United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) card holders.

"Some of them (from Myanmar) are holders of fake UNHCR cards. IOM wants Malaysia to resolve the problem.

"In addition, IOM has also offered to set up a training centre to train those who are undocumented, or documented but not allowed to work, to improve their skills in order to reduce social problems in the country," he said.

Ahmad Zahid said Malaysia and IOM would form a strategic cooperation to tackle migration issues covering aspects of immigration affairs, human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, including by organising capacity-building courses and training for staff of related ministries and agencies.

In his meeting with Swing, Ahmad Zahid said, they also discussed the Global Compact for Migration

a mutual understanding at the global-level under the auspices of the United Nations to address the issue of global migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner.

"Malaysia has expressed interest in participating in the process of forming this understanding, based on the country's challenges, experience and expertise in dealing with the aspects of migration so far. The aspects of migration need to be addressed as well as possible because it can impact a country, either positively or negatively," he said.

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