

### **Study being run on who qualifies for expat status**

SEPANG: The exact criteria of those who can be given expatriate status will be announced next month, says Home Minister Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainudin.

He said a study to determine who could actually be categorised as an expatriate in Malaysia was being conducted.

While he did not specify why this was being looked into, he said the study would enable the authorities to identify those who could be provided facilities meant for expatriates.

“When we mention an expatriate, does a person who earns RM3,000 or RM5,000 be considered an expatriate?

“That is why I have asked for the study to be done. By the end of December, we will announce the exact criteria for those who can be given expatriate status,” he said after launching the expatriate service division satellite centre (ESC).

ESC is the latest facility by the Immigration Department where expatriates can collect their employment pass on arrival at Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

According to Immigration statistics, there are 140,598 expatriates and their dependents in Malaysia as of Oct 21.

Of this figure, 82,280 are active expatriates with the highest number from India, followed by China, Japan, the Philippines and Indonesia.

Hamzah said the study, which would also look into high-performance positions for technology and knowledge transfer, was also to ensure only those who were of high quality be given expatriate employment passes so that priority could be given to local talents.

On ESC, he said it was an initiative to improve the ease of doing business in Malaysia where the waiting time for an employment pass to be issued to expatriates was reduced from 30 days to just one day.

This new facility is also one of the 100-day key performance indicators (KPIs) for Hamzah and the Home Ministry.

“With the hard work of everyone in the ministry, we have managed to tick all of our KPI boxes,” he said.

On another matter, Hamzah said there were 120,000 foreign workers in the plantation sector who had registered with the recalibration programme, but the number was insufficient to meet the demand from the sector.

“It only meets 20% to 30% of the demand for foreign labour in the plantation sector.

“That is why 32,000 foreigners would be brought in to ease the shortage,” he said, addressing queries raised by certain quarters on why the government was allowing the entry of foreign workers when there were more than 200,000 already registered under the labour recalibration programme.

As of Sunday, 169,984 foreign workers had opted for the repatriation recalibration programme while another 280,088 had registered for the labour recalibration programme.

According to a quick-take survey by the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Malaysia, the plantation sector is short of 70,000 workers.

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