

KERATAN AKHBAR

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'No quick fix for foreign worker shortage'



KUALA LUMPUR: The issue of foreign worker shortage is one that cannot be resolved quickly, even as many things appear “nice on paper”, says Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department (Economy) Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed.

He told the Dewan Rakyat that there were many implementation issues that still needed to be addressed by the government.

“For instance, some 450,000 foreign workers had been approved to enter Malaysia but only 100,000 had arrived.

“Human Resources Minister Datuk Seri M. Saravanan will meet with the relevant stakeholders today (Monday) to gather details of the issues – whether it is an issue from the source country, immigration or human resources.

“I am confident that he will be able to address those issues,” he said in reply to a supplementary question from Datuk Seri Tajuddin Abdul Rahman (BN-Pasir Salak) during Question Time.

Tajuddin asked the government about measures taken to address manpower-related issues that had caused economic losses such as within the plantation sector which had incurred an estimated RM20bil in losses a year.

The Human Resources Ministry had previously allowed the hiring of foreign workers for three industries – construction, manufacturing and service – from all 15 source countries to help alleviate the ongoing labour shortage.

Mustapa also noted that the Cabinet had been hashing out the issue regularly for almost five to six months.

“We have discussed this every week until all of us are bored.

“That is why we have decided on having the Human Resources Minister hold meetings with all the relevant stakeholders,” added Mustapa.

Mustapa said with the help of the Special Taskforce to Facilitate Business (Pemudah), meetings to discuss how to reduce red tape and bureaucracy in the government were held every month.

On a question from Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (Pejuang-Langkawi) about the impact of the depreciation of the ringgit against the US dollar, Mustapa said the direct liability of the Federal Government was below 5%.

“Most of the direct debt is in ringgit and the impact is minimal,” he said.