

## Red tape thwarts move to legalise migrant workers, say groups

By **Ainaa Aiman** - April 16, 2021 9:30 AM



*Undocumented migrants have been given up to June 30 to regularise themselves or leave.*

PETALING JAYA: A migrant rights group says there have been many complaints from employers and companies about the problems they face when trying to legalise their workers under the government's recalibration or amnesty programme.

As such, it said, many employers tend to find the easy way out by hiring undocumented workers to complete their work.

"Nothing is transparent and direct," Tenaganita's executive director, Glorene Das, told FMT, in response to reports of various immigration raids against undocumented migrants working at condominium construction sites.

"They are kept waiting by the Immigration Department or the home ministry. A lot of money is spent in these processes without any assurance to the employers."



*Glorene Das.*

Many social media users have questioned why employers who hired the undocumented migrants were not facing legal action.

Das said that enforcing higher fines for employers hiring such migrants was not the simple solution to the country's longstanding, systemic issue with unregulated foreign labour.

"There are good employers. Some would even go all-out to release the workers and make efforts about their documents, but the system is taking way too long," she said.

"They always demand for more money, and we have been told there are many layers of agents involved."

She said there was a crucial need for a national labour migration policy despite the government's commitment to decrease dependence on foreign labour.

Das said foreign labour was still needed in all sectors, and the past year had shown that Malaysians were not keen to work in so-called 3D (dangerous, dirty and difficult) jobs.

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Shamsuddin Bardan agreed that the process was tedious.

"It also becomes even more difficult when only the Immigration Department at Putrajaya is tasked with processing the applications from the whole of the peninsula," he said.

Shamsuddin said the time-frame for the programme, from Nov 16 last year to June 30, was also too short.



*Shamsuddin Bardan.*

He said the amnesty only applied to workers in construction, manufacturing, plantation and agriculture, while the criteria set for employers and migrant workers was also restrictive.

The number of migrants being registered was also subject to a quota approved by the Labour Department.

He said a big number of undocumented migrants already in Malaysia were not eligible to apply, as not all of them were employed and many were own-account workers or self-employed.