

Final say Indonesia's

> Malaysia ready to act on revised terms of employment of maids: Subramaniam

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PUTRAJAYA: Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr S. Subramaniam reiterated yesterday that the final say in dispatching domestic helpers from Indonesia lies with the government of that country.

This is because Malaysia is ready to fulfil its end of the deal under revised terms of employment, he told a press conference here.

"I repeat, we will honour everything promised in the memorandum. It is now up to the Indonesian government (to decide)," Subramaniam said at the ministry after announcing the appointment of members of the National Labour Advisory Council.

"We don't know why there are delays on the Indonesian government's side," he said.

It has been almost five months since governments of the two countries signed a revised memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the supply of domestic helpers. There are, however, to date at least 50,000 Malaysian families still awaiting their arrival.

The MoU was intended to mark the official lifting of a two-year freeze on the recruitment of maids from Indonesia.

Under the agreement, both governments were required to set up a joint task force to execute, enforce and monitor the implementation of the newly agreed terms before maids were dispatched. The terms are expected to improve the welfare of domestic helpers, and at the same time ensure that employers are provided with trained maids at a reasonable cost.

It was learnt that while the task force in Indonesia had met five times to sort out details with regard to the recruitment and training of maids by appointed agencies, Malaysia had been slow to hold up its end of the deal.

Asked for comment, Subramaniam, confirming that the task force in Malaysia



(From left) Malaysian Employers Federation president Datuk Azman Shah, Datuk Seri Harun, Subramaniam and Malaysian Trade Union Congress president Mohd Khalid Atan during the announcement of National Labour Advisory Council members in Putrajaya.

had met only twice, said: "The whole idea is to agree to the issues stated in the MoU and then look at other issues."

He added that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak was expected to engage in a dialogue with Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono soon, with the issue of domestic helpers on the agenda.

The Indonesian government through its embassy in Kuala Lumpur had on several occasions issued strong statements indicating concern over the protection of domestic helpers employed in Malaysia.

Among others, Malaysia has been criticised for allowing employers to directly recruit maids from Indonesia, despite

Indonesian law prohibiting it as providing loopholes for human trafficking.

Despite the shaky start, the Indonesian Embassy's minister-counsellor for information, social and cultural affairs Suryana Sastradiredja told *theSun* yesterday the embassy had been informed of Malaysia's readiness to fulfil all conditions set at a second joint task force meeting last week.

"There is also no more talk of direct recruitment," Suryana, who sits on the task force, said.

He added that as the MoU was signed by the two governments, speculations on the issue by private businesses would be counter-productive to the ongoing discussion.