

Govt approves intake of 179,451 migrant workers in 5 sectors

By Veena Babulal, Tengku Zarith Sofia - April 12, 2022 @ 4:50pm



Human Resources Minister Datuk Seri M Saravanan said 24,560 from the overall 179,451 applicants or first batch of workers were expected to have completed their interviews. -NSTP/ROHANIS SHUKRI

KUALA LUMPUR: Putrajaya will approve the intake of 179,451 migrant workers in five critical sectors, with the first batch set to be processed before the end of this month.

Human Resources Minister Datuk Seri M Saravanan said 24,560 from the overall 179,451 applicants or first batch of workers were expected to have completed their interviews.

This group of workers were also expected to have their applications processed and approved by April 27.

He said the ministry would expedite the application of the following batch involving 154,891 foreign workers and bring them in within the next six weeks.

"As of April 7, a total of 519,937 applications for foreign workers have been received and of that number, more than 50 per cent of the 290,939 applications have yet to be submitted by 2,578 employers.

"About 40,000 were rejected for not following proper procedure. Some were incomplete, ineligible applications and involving frozen sectors.

"Others simply didn't click send when they completed their online applications. But they can appeal to us," he told a press conference here today.

Saravanan said while the government had yet to unfreeze recruitment of migrants for textile business, goldsmiths, scrap metal workshops and barbers, he would be writing in to the Home Ministry to expedite the matter.

Saravanan further said applications for the recruitment of migrant workers were now only available online.

He said the government had phased out manual processing of the forms and ministers were no longer involved in this process.

The system also enables the application to be shared with the Home Ministry and other regulatory agencies. However the multilayered approval requirements take some time.

"In terms of monitoring, I have a responsibility to ensure that these job opportunities are still given to locals," he said. If there were no local workers then the jobs were offered to foreign workers.

"It's not that I'm not aware of the current needs, but I have to study in-depth so that all factors are taken into account, then we allow it," he said referring to grouses from industry players on getting approval on migrant recruitment.

The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) had earlier said there was an urgent need to address the labour shortage in the country and it was exacerbated by delays in the recruitment applications for migrant workers.

Saravanan said he was forced to reopen recruitment of migrant workers in stages for sectors that were dependent on migrants because locals were unwilling to do dirty, dangerous and difficult jobs.

"The industry players were upset with me for not opening up the foreign worker recruitment (throughout the pandemic), but I tried my best," he said, while drawing on the government resolve to slash the number of migrants in the workforce by 50 per cent.

"I think I was unfair to the industry players for over a year, to the extent the plantation sector had lost RM20 billion due to this and locked borders."

"And this is money that could have been used for the people."