

Threats of illegal migrants to malaysia's security



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Today, they may be illegal immigrants, tomorrow, they be criminals or even terrorists! Is that the way our security is being treated? We may not only be bankrupt in a few years' time but possibly even without a country if we never overcome this illegal immigrant's problem. It was reported, in the past 10-15 years 1 to 2 million left Malaysia to work and reside in overseas. Malaysia populations were at 22-23 millions about 15 years ago. Ten years after that, the population increased to 28 millions. Have you wonder where do these people come from? Our previous birth rate could only sustain or increase the population to an optimum of 500 thousands to 1 million, which would already consider great. The actual fact of this tremendous increasement of population is because millions of illegal immigrants and illegal workers flooded due to poor Malaysian immigration policy and local authority. Foreign nationals are seen all over in the streets, coffee shops, and stalls now days in Malaysia.

Is this a good thing?

Please don't misunderstand my statement, I do not discriminate foreign workers, especially skilled workers, from coming and residing in Malaysia. Since it has also been Malaysia aim to increase her population, the immigration policy should be more open to attract skilled workers by being more efficient and practice equal opportunities to all nationalities and background. Welcome the workers in a legal ways than opening backdoors to them then blame them flooded in illegally. Lack of proper checking at immigration resulted many workers coming without skill, proper qualification and/or experience. Singaporeans migrated to overseas because there are places they feel are better for their families and themselves. It doesn't mean Singapore is a bad country. The same can be said for Malaysia. People move around the world. Other countries welcome skilled migrant workers entering through proper immigration procedure. This is what Malaysia lack of.

Definition of Illegal Immigrant

Illegal immigrants are people who migrate across national borders without complying with the legal requirements. Some people call those they suspect of illegal immigration as illegal immigrants or undocumented immigrants. People who arrive legally but then overstay their visas may also have illegal status. The term illegal immigrant is highly contested because some consider it a pejorative term, since some consider violating the law a moral as well as legal issue. Because of these, the illegal immigrants give serious effects to Malaysia which makes our government worried about the Malaysian community.

Why Illegal Immigrants Make Their Way To This Country?

When the poverty pulverizes the human, people decides to get out of their place of origin to the new places, where the opportunities are abound. If the new place is closer to their home, they may risk their life even by travelling in a small vessel and take the short voyage under dark. If the same place is quite afar, they may find means by selling the properties or taking a loan from the money lenders to fulfill the dream of good life. When an immigrant worker earns enough and sends back home, they are enthusiastic to seek the dream of having a home of their own and other comforts. Currently, areas where most foreign workers can be found are in the plantation, labor-intensive manufacturing industries, construction, domestic help, coffee shops and mamak shops and cleaning services.

Irregular migrants are likely to work in the informal sectors of the economy or in the remote parts of the country. By virtue of their unlawful status, they are easily open to exploitation, and have little or no avenue for legal redress. They succumb to poverty easily and live in squalid housing conditions. They often resort to crime when unemployed. By by-passing the health screening system for migrant workers, they are a source of highly contagious diseases.

None the less, irregular migrants equally contribute to economic growth and development of the country. They help alleviate labour market imbalances, and especially enhance labour market flexibility by providing a reserve labour pool that can be tapped upon as and when needed. The heavy reliance of the economy on this manpower reserve is clearly evident by policy reversals each time a crackdown on irregular migrants is implemented.

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Foreigners who enter the country using entry points other than the authorized ports of entry are classified as undocumented migrants. They enter either on their own or facilitated by agents or human traffickers. The main motive of these irregular migrants is to seek employment or engage in petty trading, but there are instances where foreigners enter the country illegally purely to commit crimes such as theft and burglary or engage in promiscuous activities. Irregular migration that falls under the second category has been on the rise in recent years, and it consists of those who enter the country using tourist visa, the social visit pass or the student visa, but overstay to seek employment or engage in light commercial trading. Since the visa-on-arrival (VOA) was introduced in September 2006 to boost tourism, 20, 481 visitors or more than half of the 36, 701 visa applicants have overstayed.

Migrants whose work permits have been revoked unlawfully by employers fall into irregular status. Such instances include disputes between the employer and the migrant worker, whereby the employer may unilaterally terminate the latter's employment, and hence his visa and work permit. Should the migrant seek legal redress against his employer, he/she has to pay RM100 for a Special Monthly Pass to remain in the country. Migrant workers holding Special Passes are not allowed to work in the country, and with no income to support their cost of living and legal fees, it is virtually impossible to seek legal redress. Exemption from paying the fees is available for the very few who seek the assistance from NGOs. Also included in this group are contract defaulters and pass abuses. Work permits issued to contract migrant workers are tied to the workplace and employer, and the

work permit is invalidated the moment the worker terminates his employment or switches his employer.

Despite the lawful means to entry and employment in Malaysia, irregular migrants take on high risks to be in irregular status for a variety of reasons. Unlike the employment of highly-skilled labour, legal recruitment of low-skilled labour involves several intermediaries in the sending and receiving countries to process their movement, raising their transactions costs of migration. In contrast, illegal employment is less time-consuming and cumbersome, and cheaper for both employers and migrants. The recruitment policy for contract migrant labour using the work permit system ties the migrant worker to a particular employer and location. As a result, foreign workers who seek greater freedom and flexibility, and who see opportunities to maximise their incomes by reducing their transaction costs and earn more income by taking on multiple jobs resort to irregular migration.

The extensive migration networks, both social and commercial, developed over the last three decades, malpractices in law enforcement and regular amnesties have encouraged and facilitated their entry, employment and evasion from apprehension. On the demand side, there is a ready secondary job market for irregular migrants. Despite the severe policy sanction against employers hiring migrants unlawfully, some continue to hire them since they are cheaper and can be hired for shorter periods than warranted by the work permit. In practice, employer sanction has not been easy to implement due to lack of evidence, giving the impression that they are immune to the tough laws.

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If you guys are still wondering why so many illegal immigrants make their way so easily into this country, then perhaps you should consider this:

Illegal immigrants use fake passports at checkpoints. Immigration officers know the passport is fake but they still allow the entries. The illegal immigrant thinks that he is cleared and proceeds to whatever purpose he came for, mostly working for Malaysian employees, thinking that his passport would be good enough. Multiply this practice by the thousands. Sooner or later, the Police or Immigration Department conducts an illegal immigrant raid. Those who thought they had "good" passports will now be arrested and then being sent back to their respective countries again.

2. Deals are set up with syndicates for human trafficking. Illegal immigrants are sold for about RM 400 each and sent to the border under the guise of deportation. In this no-man's land, no one in the world except the syndicates and corrupted immigration officers would know the existence of all those human slaves. Unfortunately for the illegal immigrants, even the Government of their own countries does not want them. So, with the thousands of illegal immigrants in this country, this is a trade that could easily feed the corrupted people who is responsible for all this with hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Overstaying a Visa. They come to our country as visitors and then when they feel and see the opportunity to work here and sake of giving his family a luxury and comfortable life they will decide to stay here permanently to work as illegal immigrants after overdue of their visa and permits.

The effect of Illegal Immigrants in Malaysia

Firstly, let me clarify that I do not support the large number of illegal immigrants in Malaysia mainly because I think they are a significant contribution factor to the significant increase in crimes and other social ills. In a fast moving global world, migration in search of better opportunities has become easier. But this migration brings a lot of problem for the migrants, especially unskilled workers. Our country too has been hit with such problems. It is no longer safe to go to many places especially at night, and all doors and windows need to be reinforced by metal grills. The growing illegal immigrant problem had gone out of control. This issue is often hushed down and many Malaysians may not be even aware of the situation.

Migration across our national border by illegal immigrants strongly affects our social security. This is because some of them are the most wanted terrorists in their countries. They come to Malaysia to release themselves from the law impeachment. By doing the own same action in our boundaries, they are associated with the cases of robbery and rape. In fact, entire citizens live in fear and maybe afraid to go outside. Those illegal immigrants are influenced by their culture such as fighting among each other and lifestyle to survive in their country. For sure this will bring a bad image to Malaysia. For instance, the cases which involved an Indonesian shot out and died in a police attack not a normal case more. On 10 March 2005, the Royal Malaysian Police officers shoot four Indonesian workers when they became wary while carrying out a security patrol in Sungai Buloh area at Selangor.

The migrations of the illegal immigrants also bring another big problem to our country that is dangerous diseases. As we know illegal immigrants come

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from rural areas and when they enter our boundaries they do not even go to the public or the private health department for a medical check-up. Diseases such as HIV, AIDS and TB are some of the disease brought by them. The health problem will enlarge because this illegal immigrant brings lot of health problem from their country. For instance the HIV, it refers to the smuggling of women for the purposes of forced prostitution and this will lead to HIV virus in other hand it will increase the total of fatality. Because of these diseases, entire citizens become afraid to be affected by those and some of them have been a victim of the diseases. Nowadays, more and more people are suffering from these diseases and this contributes towards the cases of death.

Civil rights are class of right and freedom that protect the individual from unwarranted government action. What this mean is that violation of civil rights is our local labor right has been taken by the illegal immigrants. Most employers in our country like to hire them rather than our own local workers. The cost to hire foreign workers is cheaper than locals in terms of their salary. For instance, the construction industry is dominated by Philippines workers, maid services are normally related with Indonesians and the plantation sector is usually run by the Indonesians and Philippines. Subsequently, our local workers are faced with the shortage of job opportunities.

Future Policy Directions

In order to combat irregular migration, the state has to address the underlying causes for irregular migration. However, the current approach towards managing international labour migration is heavily skewed towards

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seeking solutions to the symptoms. In other words, instead of downsizing irregular migration through polices to speed up productivity based growth, Malaysia has moved towards a strategy of attrition through tough enforcement. The persistent enforcement of the policy has reduced the incidence of irregular migration, but it is a cost-prohibitive solution that is unsustainable.

The principal objective of Malaysia's migrant labour policy is to gradually phase out the use of contract migrant labour, and to allow sufficient time for skills deepening to foster productivity-based growth. However, there has been a yawning gap in policy intent and policy implementation. In practice, the two-prong strategy to reduce the reliance on migrant labour has been heavily skewed towards regulating the supply of migrant workers. Measures to increase the supply and demand for skilled labour have been heavily compromised by the pervasive ethnic-based affirmative policies.

In order to cut back its foreign labour workforce, Malaysia needs to re-examine its strategy to increase investment in low value added agricultural activities. Instead, it should provide incentives for Malaysian investors to relocate its low value added activities overseas. There are also inherent flaws in the foreign labour recruitment policies Unlike Singapore, which imposes a lower levy on higher skilled workers, Malaysia imposes a higher levy on higher skilled workers, which appears to contradict the national policy to encourage skill-intensive industries. The rationale in the Malaysian case is to impose a lower levy on sectors perceived to face critical labour shortages, while a higher levy is imposed on sectors where the problem of excess labour demand has been perceived to be less serious. In other words,

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the short-term goals to meet labour shortages override the longer-term goals of economic restructuring.

Given a small population base, and surrounded by countries with differing labour productivity, Malaysia will continue to import low-skilled migrant labour in the foreseeable future. The experience of advanced industrial countries also shows that it is difficult to do away entirely with low-skilled imported labour since even capital intensive industries do require low-skilled labour for simple tasks such as packing and moving. Moreover, as the level of education in the country rises, the reservation wage increases and the natives tend to shy away from these low-paid jobs.

Conclusion

After more than two decades of policy experiments with regulating the inflow of contract migrant workers, Malaysian has established a fairly elaborate administrative system to import foreign labour. However, immense market pressures have deterred the proper functioning of the system in place, and have contributed to the development of an informal recruitment industry, that often tends to exploit the migrants. Incidence of malpractices in law enforcement, forgery and human trafficking has contributed to large numbers of undocumented migrants in the country, leading to a tough approach to combat irregular migration.

The nationwide surveillance programme to apprehend irregular migrants and tight border as well as internal controls have combined to curb the incidence of irregular migration, but at high cost to the state as well as to the migrant. This policy approach fails to address the root causes of migration, and

therefore require a persistent programme of enforcement that is unsustainable. Curbing irregular migration will remain an uphill battle for as long as the gains outweigh the costs and risks to the prospective migrant. There is also a wide gap between policy intent and policy implementation with respect to Malaysia's foreign worker policy. The policy is heavily skewed towards controlling the supply of migrant labour, while efforts to enhance the supply and demand for labour have been compromised by the pervasive ethnic-based affirmative policies.

Last but not least, if we love our country, let's fight together to overcome illegal immigrants problem in the same way we fought for our independence 53 years ago. This problem can only be successfully tackled with a clear long-term plan and certainly not with rash action. There are humanitarian considerations as well as social and economic ones. We need to know the true state of the illegal population in the state and bring a measure of control over them. The controversy over dubious MyKads being issued also needs to be investigated. There are serious consequences if sovereignty and security are not fully restored. We should not turn a blind eye anymore. It is high time the government gets going to address this problem before it becomes too grave a threat to the nation.

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