

Brunei, RI to conclude migrant worker agreement

JAK-POST: 21/7/18.

Dian Septiari

THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

Brunei Darussalam promised to finalize an agreement on the placement and protection of Indonesian migrant workers by the end of this year, as a follow-up to Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah's commitment during his visit in May.

The time frame to conclude a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was made when Brunei's Second Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Erywan Yusof met Foreign Minister Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi at the fourth Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation (JCBC) in Jakarta on Friday.

Yusof said since the last bilateral consultation in 2013, the two countries had a few items that remained outstanding, "including issues close to the heart, regarding the welfare of Indonesian nationals".

"We want to implement this MoU so that we can ensure that the workers, the nationals of Indonesia who are working and contributing to the economy of Brunei, are taken care of."

There are currently 82,000

MoU protecting Indonesian workers in Brunei to conclude by year's end

Sriwijaya Air to fly Balikpapan-BSB route

Brunei interested in Pindad's Anoa APC

Indonesians working in Brunei, which has a population of around 423,000 people.

Indonesian workers in Brunei vary from informal workers like maids and drivers to oil, construction, industrial and plantation workers as well as nurses.

Retno said the agreement on the placement and protection of Indonesian workers was important due to the sheer number of Indonesians in Brunei.

"They said they would finalize the draft before the end of this year. At least that time line will be the benchmark for us to push the negotiations forward," she said.

An agreement for the placement and protection of Indonesian workers is required by the 2017 law on the protection of In-

Indonesian migrant workers.

The MoU is expected to regulate the cost structure of the placement process without which migrant workers would have to shoulder the burden of payments over several months.

Indonesia also wanted the MoU, which is expected to be concluded within months, to regulate the work relations and others, Retno said after a meeting between President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo and Bolkiah.

In 2011, then-Indonesian foreign minister Marty Natalegawa and his Bruneian counterpart signed the Mandatory Consular Notification, which required the MoU as a follow up.

By 2013, Indonesia initiated talks on the agreement with several countries including Brunei, highlighting the placement procedure, job contract, salary, payment method, weekly day-off rights, passport keeping, workers recruitment agencies, placement cost, competency training and conflict resolution.

At a bilateral meeting in 2015, the two countries reportedly agreed to most of the contents of the draft MoU including salaries,

hours of rest, a six-day working week, leave, contract periods, cost structures and procedures for filing complaints in case of disputes, Antara reported.

Other issues discussed at the JCBC included cooperation in strategic industries because the sultan previously expressed his interest in purchasing Anoa armored personnel carriers made by state-owned firearms and land system maker PT Pindad.

The two countries also agreed to increase cooperation on preventing and combating transnational organized crime, especially human trafficking, people smuggling and illegal drugs as well as countering terrorism.

"Indonesia and Brunei sat together for subregional cooperation on countering terrorists and cross-border terrorism in July last year, and we will do so again on Aug. 6," she said.

On economic cooperation, the two countries welcomed the signing of an MoU between Indonesian airline Sriwijaya Air and Bruneian engineering firm SKBB Sdn. Bhd. to establish flights between Bandar Seri Begawan and Balikpapan, East Kalimantan.