

UK–Indonesia Talks Seek to Expand Legal Routes for Indonesian Migrant Workers

July 30, 2025

— Categories: Politics & Government



The Indonesian government, in collaboration with its embassy in London, is intensifying its efforts to create more legal opportunities for Indonesian workers in the United Kingdom. Recent high-level talks have focused on improving the governance of migrant placements and reducing the risks of exploitation under seasonal worker schemes.

The discussions were led by Christina Aryani, Indonesia's Deputy Minister for the Protection of Migrant Workers, who stressed the need for formal and transparent placement processes. The goal is to unlock access to well-regulated, higher-paid job markets in the UK while protecting workers' rights and dignity.

While acknowledging the UK's increasingly strict immigration policies, both governments expressed optimism about establishing a more structured and mutually acceptable framework. Past programmes, though challenged, revealed areas of demand in the UK labour market, particularly in agriculture, hospitality, and care sectors, where Indonesian workers could potentially be placed legally and safely.

Aryani emphasised the urgent need to reform Indonesia's placement agency system to ensure that migrant workers are deployed through procedures accepted by both countries. She called on the Indonesian Embassy in London to help map high-demand sectors and maintain oversight across recruitment and employment chains. Director General Ahnas Jusuf supported these efforts, affirming the ministry's intent to align placement protocols with both UK and Indonesian regulatory standards.

This effort is part of a broader strategy by the Indonesian government to diversify the destinations of its overseas workers. By focusing on vocational training, licensing reform, and stronger data sharing among agencies, Indonesia aims to better equip its workers for global opportunities and reduce reliance on informal or unregulated routes.

Indonesia has set a target of placing 425,000 workers overseas by the end of 2025, an increase from around 297,000 in 2024. Remittances

from these workers contribute significantly to Indonesia's economy, estimated at over Rp300 trillion annually. Ensuring their safety and legality is not only a humanitarian imperative but also an economic priority.

The approach, steered by President Prabowo Subianto's administration, avoids populist rhetoric in favour of pragmatic coordination. While left-leaning critics have raised concerns about potential exploitation under temporary schemes, Indonesia's strategy leans on regulatory enforcement and bilateral cooperation to expand legal migration routes responsibly.

With continued dialogue between Jakarta and London, the next steps include finalising target sectors, refining embassy data systems, and rebuilding public confidence in legal recruitment. This measured approach may help secure long-term benefits for both countries and their labour markets.