

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

The University, an institution of higher education, is a place for students to acquire knowledge, values, norms, and experience in order to prepare them to contribute to society. As the nation's future, the young generation is expected to be future leaders and agents of change for the country's development and prosperity. Therefore, students are expected to have not only theoretical but also practical knowledge, good interpersonal skills, and supporting abilities, such as critical thinking and problem-solving, that will prepare them to become the nation's prospective leaders.

The internship program is a method for applying the knowledge, theories, and skills acquired during university study so that students can comprehend the service process and be prepared prior to graduation. As a student of International Relations, the author is aware that the majority of our coursework focuses on diplomacy, politics, economics, cross-border societies, and international issues. In the context of International Relations study, the author is interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the complexities of Indonesian migrant worker cases abroad.

In this case, the author will pursue an internship at the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. By doing the internship at the Indonesian Embassy will be the best way to understand about the challenge of Indonesia in doing the protection to Indonesian migrant workers with the fact that the internship place is the most busiest Indonesian Embassy in the world due to the highest number of Indonesian who resides in Malaysia (Media Indonesia, 2021).

Indonesia and Malaysia share common characteristics

in terms of geographical location and social culture. These countries are also predicted to be the world axis of moderate Islam because both are capable of demonstrating to the world that Islam is not about terrorism and violence, but rather about attempting to create rahmatan lil 'alamin, or grace to the universe. In November 2017, Indonesia and Malaysia announced the development of moderate Islam in order to have a systemic impact on the rise and progress of the Islamic world (Antara & Agustina, 2017).

However, in achieving the goal of being moderate, there is a stumbling block in the form of numerous problems that these two countries face. There are three major issues: cultural contestation, territorial dispute, and migrant worker issues (Hermono, *Indonesia and Malaysia Relations*, 2022). The author will examine one of the major issues in this study, which is the case of migrant workers.

As the research background, Malaysia has had full employment and a high level of education since 1990. Nevertheless, the Malaysian economy relies heavily on migrant workers to perform low-skilled jobs, with approximately one-third of workers in the services sector and twenty-five percent in agriculture (World Bank, 2020). Along with Bangladesh, Nepal, and Philippines, Indonesia is one of the leading countries that provide foreign workers with an estimated 2.7 million workers.

Due to Indonesia's high unemployment rate and economic pressure, the job opportunities offered by Malaysia are advantageous to Indonesians especially those who lived in rural areas. For the vast majority of Indonesian migrant workers, working in Malaysia in a low-skilled position carries a very high risk, as there are numerous problematic cases. From January to May of 2022, the Embassy of Indonesia resolved 46 cases of unpaid wages totaling approximately Rp 2.9 billion (Chaterine, 2021). In addition to this case, migrant workers face issues such as falsification of documents, human

trafficking, the desire to be repatriated, sexual harassment, and acts of violence from employers.

Indeed, the risk is very high, as is the presence of illegal migrants. Migrant workers apprehended in raids are frequently imprisoned and deported back to their home countries. Although many people are free after paying compensation. According to Mr. Hermono, Indonesia's ambassador to Malaysia, only about one-third of workers are documented, with the rest arriving illegally. Given their financial circumstances, the majority of them are reckless enough to embark on the hazardous journey. In December 2021, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency discovered that only 14 individuals out of 50 had survived the perilous voyage; 18 bodies had been discovered, and 20 individuals were presumed to have perished (Llewellyn, 2021).

As protection mechanism for migrant workers, the governments of Indonesia and Malaysia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on April 1, 2022, to replace a similar agreement that had expired in 2016 (Rahman, 2022). The MoU signed at the Ministry of Manpower's office in Jakarta establishes a single-channel mechanism for all workers placement, monitoring, and return processes in Malaysia. In addition, the MoU highlighted a number of important points in nominal terms, including the salaries for the workers, which set the minimum wage for PMI at 1,500 ringgits and the minimum income for prospective employers at 7,000 ringgits (Karunia, 2022).

Nonetheless, after the signing of the MoU, Malaysia was deemed to have violated its terms, prompting Indonesia to place a temporary ban on the export of migrant workers to Malaysia. Malaysia's immigration authorities continued to use an online recruitment system for domestic workers that was linked to allegations of human trafficking and forced labor, prompting the imposition of the freeze. The system's continued operation violated an April agreement between Malaysia and

Indonesia (Reuters, 2022).

On August 1, 2022, Indonesia agrees to lift its ban on sending migrant workers to Malaysia. This decision follows the resolution of worker rights concerns by Indonesia and Malaysia. After both nations agreed to test a single channel to facilitate the recruitment and entry of Indonesian migrant workers, Indonesia agreed to resume sending workers.

From the perspective of the author, this phenomenon is intriguing to be analyzed. The Indonesian migrant workers case in Malaysia is one of the major bilateral issues that might affecting the stability of both nations. Recommitting after the Indonesian government's severe rebuke and pressure does not guarantee the safety and justice of Indonesian migrant workers.

Therefore, the author will examine;

- a. What is the Indonesia's diplomacy in the case of migrant worker protection in Malaysia?
- b. What are the impacts of the diplomacy that conducted by Indonesia in the case of migrant worker protection in Malaysia?

The timeframe of the analysis is from April 1st, 2022, when Indonesia and Malaysia agreed to sign the Memorandum of Understanding, until the end of September, which is the duration of the author's internship program at the Embassy of Indonesia in Kuala Lumpur.

## **1.2. Purpose of Internship**

An internship is a part of the learning process that allows students to gain knowledge by experiencing and understanding the service process that occurs in the field and its correlation to the theories covered in the lecture. The expected outcomes of this internship are as follows:

- a. To gain knowledge and experience in the professional work field, particularly at the Embassy of Indonesia, one of the international relations student job opportunities;

- b. To implement the theory that had learned in a professional setting;
- c. To conduct research on Indonesia and Malaysia's bilateral issues;
- d. To enhance the skills necessary for the student's preparation for the professional field;
- e. to obtain a valuable network from the embassy and other affiliated institutions.

### **1.3. Benefits of Internship**

Here are some expected benefits of internship at the Embassy of Indonesia in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia:

- a. For the International Relations program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, as the academic institution, this internship will be a great opportunity to establish a good relationship and cooperation for future academic advancement;
- b. For the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Kuala Lumpur, as government entity, this internship will increase the success of the government's goals for improving national education by facilitating students' learning in practice. Moreover, the addition of interns to the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur will facilitate the Embassy's work through the completion of assigned tasks, and interns will be able to participate in knowledge and opinion exchanges that are advantageous to the institution's growth;
- c. For the intern, this internship will provide an excellent opportunity to gain insight on how the professional field operates. Second, it provides students with the knowledge and experience they need to prepare for the real-world workplace. Third, the intern will be able to create network and connection to have the opportunity to conduct

research in the field of international relations using the embassy's relevant data and resources.