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INTERNATIONAL HELP NEEDED FOR NEW BOAT PEOPLE, SAYS SYED HAMID ALBAR

MELAKA, March 22 (Bernama) -- Much help is needed from the international community to prevent the new wave of boat people affecting the Southeast Asian region, Defence Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar said today.

He said the economic crisis, if allowed to prolong, could create serious implications similar to the Vietnamese exodus of the 70s.

Commenting on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speech in Germany yesterday, Datuk Syed Hamid said so far there had been increased cooperation among Asean countries to resolve the crisis.

Speaking to reporters after opening the Kota Melaka Umno division delegates conference here, he said when the situation worsened, there would be starvation, resulting in mass exodus akin to the Vietnamese "boat-people".

"Malaysia is feeling the effects now and is taking measures to control the situation before it gets out of hand," he said.

The wide-scale security operation in the Straits of Melaka was to deter the entry of illegal immigrants, he said. --BERNAMA

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