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Immigrants-Victim

MANY INDONESIAN IMMIGRANTS CHEATED BY "TEKONGS"

LUMUT, March 20 (Bernama) -- Many Indonesians who entered Malaysia as illegal immigrants are victims of tekongs and bogus employment agents looking for money, Maritime Enforcement Coordination Centre (MECC) director Datuk Tuan Hashim Tuan Mohamad said today.

"Each of the illegal immigrants paid between RM500 and RM600 for the tekongs and agents to smuggle them into this country, he told reporters after launching the integrated "Ops Nyah" at the MECC complex here.

Tuan Hashim said the tekongs disregarded the safety of their passengers and were only after money, In many cases the passengers were forced to jump into the sea after which they attempt to reach the shore on their own.

"This irresponsible act caused many Indonesians to drown when they tried to swim ashore," he said.

Last year, 66 Indonesians were drowned while attempting to land on Malaysia's shores, and the figure so far this year is 26.

Tuan Hashim said patrols in the Melaka Straits should be stepped to curb the increasing number of Indonesians entering the country illegally.

In conjunction with the launch of the integrated Ops Nyah which is coordinated by the MECC, four navy ships, two air force and police air wing aircraft were moved to sea with Fisheries Department boats standing by.

This is the first operation where the combined force of the MECC, navy, marine police, police air wing, air force and the Fisheries Department is used to curb the entry of illegal immigrants.

It covers the nation's waters from Pulau Langkawi to Tanjung Piai in Johor.

Tuan Hashim said the MECC would use its marine monitoring system using sophisticated radars to detect intrusions in the straits.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is expected to launch the radar system in Port Klang soon.

He said the MECC was cooperating with the Indonesian marine authorities in Tanjung Pinang, Riau which detained 400 immigrants and four tekongs who attempted to sneak into Malaysia last week.

Tuan Hashim also said the MECC received reports that 86 illegal immigrants were detained along the Melaka Straits in Tanjung Tualang, Tanjung Langsat and Tanjung Rinpın (all in Johor), Sungai Peringgi Nenas near Port Klang, Sekinchan (Selangor) and Pantai Remis (Perak). -- BERNAMA

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