

Thai workers in M'sia funding insurgents: diplomat
Malaysiakini.com
September 10, 2010

A Thai diplomat in Kelantan has said his countrymen working in Malaysia are funding insurgents in Thailand's restive southern provinces.

Thai consul-general Surapon Petch-Vra, who is based in Kelantan state, told the New Straits Times Thai workers have been sending back money to groups involved in the violence in the country's south which flared up six years ago.

The southern region was once an autonomous Malay sultanate until Buddhist Thailand annexed it a century ago, provoking decades of tension that flared up into the present insurgency.

"Admittedly, a few of our citizens who are earning an income in Malaysia are sending their money to certain perpetrators of violence," he was quoted as telling the paper.

"However, it has to be emphasised that the majority of our citizens working in Malaysia are only using their income to support themselves and their families," he added.

String of attacks

Surapon said about 200,000 Thais from the south's Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani, Songkhla and Satun provinces were working in Malaysia, in various sectors including the construction industry, the paper reported. The consul-general could not be reached for comment.

Surapon's comments follow the killing of five people in southern Thailand on Tuesday in a string of attacks by suspected militants as the military raided an insurgent training camp.

Guns, knives, Malaysian currency, medical supplies and two-way radios were among the items discovered in the eight temporary shelters surrounding the camp's communal meeting room.

Thai authorities have imposed emergency rule in the south for nearly five years, allowing the army to detain suspects for questioning without charge, but rights groups have warned alleged abuses by security forces risk stoking the conflict.

- AFP

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/142389>