

Govt will not disband Rela

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ALOR STAR: The Government will not dissolve Rela just because a handful of its members are involved in crime, Home Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Radzi Sheikh Ahmad said.

He said Rela, which has 450,000 members, was still relevant in maintaining security.

"The Government acknowledges Rela's role and Parliament has empowered its members to conduct raids and arrest illegal immigrants," he told reporters after opening the Immigration Department national sports meet at Universiti Utara Malaysia near here on Friday night.

He was responding to allegations by a non-government organisation and Al Jazeera

cable TV station that Rela members had acted violently in operations involving illegal migrants, with the foreign media likening Rela members to militants.

Suara Rakyat Malaysia (Suaram) executive director Yap Swee Seng had recently also called on the Government to disband Rela to prevent the "growth of the vigilante culture."

In defence of the voluntary community defence group, Radzi said: "Rela organises raids together with agencies like the Immigration and National Registration departments. It is not right to liken them to militia or call them vigilantes."

Rela had helped detain 16,000 illegal immigrants so far this year, he said.