

**Hishammuddin declares war on human trafficking**  
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PUTRAJAYA (Aug 15, 2011): Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein has declared war against syndicates that exploit foreign workers by charging them exorbitantly on the pretext of getting them amnesty and legalisation.

"I declare war on these syndicates. They have no humanity! They see people being trafficked as nothing more than products to be bought and sold and the plight of the victims is heartbreaking," said an incensed Hishammuddin, when commenting on the Sun's front page report yesterday that a syndicate had raked in millions of ringgit by duping foreign workers here.

A senior Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) officer disclosed that thousands of foreigners had each paid the 'Datuk'-led syndicate between RM300 and RM2,000 to ensure they get amnesty or legalisation.

More than 10,000 foreign workers nationwide have fallen prey to the syndicate, whose members claim to be officials appointed by the authorities and wear government accreditation tags in the execution of the 6P programme which comprises –

- > registration (pendaftaran),
- > legalisation (pemukatan),
- > amnesty (pengampunan),
- > supervision (pemantauan),
- > enforcement (penguatkuasaan) and
- > deportation (pengusiran).

Hishammuddin believes it is actually an international syndicate which "goes where the money is".

"They come in different forms and names and are not unique to Malaysia because the world is border-less. That is why we have got to work with our neighbours, regionally and internationally."

He said the government was also targeting international syndicates and was working closely with the Bangladesh and Australian governments, and were in talks with Indonesian, British and Chinese authorities.

"Intelligence agencies have been mobilised and even our own officers have been arrested under the ISA. I also request the public to cooperate and give us any information because I want to hunt them down," said Hishammuddin.

"It takes a lot of courage and political will but it doesn't say much about us if we allow the slave traders of today to treat humans the way they have (like animals). We won't compromise," he said.

Touching on calls to charge the 'Immigration Eight' who were freed from ISA detention after being arrested for alleged human trafficking, he said they could be prosecuted in a court of law.

"The idea of ISA is rehabilitative and they have been very cooperative in dealing with the authorities to give information on the syndicates, but it doesn't mean they are immune from being charged," said the minister.

On the tampering of the 600 biometric machines by agents appointed by the government to register illegal foreigners, he said it was not cause for major concern.

"There are cases of tampering and breakdowns but it is not a major concern because we have registered nearly two million people. This shows the real problem that we are facing ... if not for this exercise, we will never know how many (illegal foreign workers) are really here.

"People will always point fingers to blame us, blaming the system but we are determined to do this because this can affect national security," he said.

As at 8.30am today, 1,928,495 legal and illegal foreign workers have registered with the Immigration Department. Of these, 1,031,275 were illegal immigrants comprising 869,727 registered in Peninsular Malaysia and 161,548 in Sabah.

Ministry deputy secretary-general (registration and immigration) Datuk Alwi Ibrahim said a company in Johor had been asked to show cause for breaching an agreement with the government with regard to the 6P programme. "The company had offered fake 'amnesty cards' for which they charged RM3,000 – from illegal migrants," he said.

He said those who bought the card were promised that they would be safe from enforcement, despite the government's reassurance that no such measures will be taken, until the 6P exercise was over in mid-November.

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