

DPM Praises MMEA For Checking Piracy
The Malaysian Insider
February 16 , 2012

KUANTAN, Feb 16 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin today paid tribute to the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) for living up to its name in curbing piracy and robbery at sea and quashing the cynicism directed at it when it was set up seven years ago.

"Today, I can feel and see the waves of change taking place within and outside the agency," he said when launching the seventh Malaysia Maritime Day at the Malaysian Maritime Academy and Training Centre in Gebeng, here.

He said the agency, driven at the outset by about 50 officers and men who had between 10 and 35 years of experience has done the nation proud in curbing piracy and robbery at sea.

The determination and commitment of the MMEA personnel has reduced maritime crime nationwide by 16 per cent, 20.2 per cent in 2006 to 4.22 per cent last year, he said.

The success was achieved following 66,678 inspections and 4,832 arrests in a variety of cases, he added.

Muhyiddin said records at the International Maritime Bureau indicate that incidences of piracy and robbery at sea involving commercial vessels have dropped, with no case reported in 2009 and 2010 and only two last year.

"Early this year, the MMEA foiled cross-border crime cases such as the smuggling of migrants, illegal immigrants and mangrove timber. Statistics for the period 2006 to January this year show 794 of the smuggling cases," he said.

Up to 517 arrests were made in relation to encroachment in Malaysian waters by foreign fishermen between 2007 and 2011, resulting in the collection of RM236 million through fines imposed on the foreigners, seizure of vessels and auctioning of the confiscated fish, he said.

He also said that the MMEA had always stepped up its state of responsiveness in search and rescue services, whereby it has helped to save 2,182 lives and RM274 million of property.

Muhyiddin said he was optimistic that the MMEA would be able to surmount even greater challenges in discharging its duty and enhancing its image as well as rejuvenating its personnel.

At the event, the deputy prime minister presented the ISO 9001:2008 certificate to the Malaysian Maritime Academy and Training Centre, making the MMEA the first maritime enforcement agency in the world to obtain such certification.

He also launched a book on the history of MMEA produced by the agency's enforcement affairs division and presented appreciation certificates to six enforcement personnel for excellent service.

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