

Malaysia Tightens Control In North-Western Waters To Check Migrants

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ALOR SETAR, May 13 (Bernama) -- National enforcement agencies have deployed more patrol vessels in the country's north-western waters following news that more migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar are heading to Malaysia.

The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA), the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) and the Marine Police have tightened control in the waters of Penang, Kuala Kedah and Langkawi close to the Malaysian border with Thailand.

The increased patrols and tightening of control come in the wake of the landing in Langkawi of 1,158 migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar last Sunday.

The migrants numbered 993 men, 104 women and 61 children, comprising 486 members of the Rohingya community from Myanmar and 672 Bangladesh nationals.

MMEA Northern Region enforcement chief First Admiral Tan Kok Kwee said today the MMEA had sent eight patrol craft to the waters of Penang, Kuala Kedah and Langkawi.

"We (MMEA) came to know last Friday of the possibility of more boats carrying migrants heading to our waters, and we have tightened control along the border.

"The assets deployed, along with 120 MMEA personnel, will operate round the clock," he told Bernama.

Tan said the area of patrol also covered the Cincin Strait to the north of Langkawi Island.

The RMN vessels are also involved in patrolling the north-western waters.

Langkawi Region One Marine Police commanding officer DSP Rozi Abu Hassan said the marine police had stepped up patrols and control in the waters close to the Malaysian border with Thailand.

"We cannot reveal the number of patrol vessels and the personnel deployed in this special operation, but we have gone all-out," he said.

He said the Langkawi Marine Police had been deployed at full strength to prevent any breach at the border.

Rohingya Society of Malaysia (RSM) representative in Kedah, Yusuf Ali, told Bernama that several boats carrying between 5,000 and 6,000 Bangladesh and Rohingya migrants were waiting to head for Malaysia.

"They are waiting for the opportune time to set sail for Malaysia," said Yusuf, who has been living in Malaysia since 1989 as a holder of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) card.

Meanwhile, the 1,158 migrants who landed in Langkawi have been transferred in stages to the Immigration Depot in Belantik, Sik, in mainland Kedah.

According to the Kedah Immigration Department, they would be investigated for entering the country without valid travel documents.

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