

Refugees: Malaysia Gives Priority On National Security

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KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) -- The authorities had rejected the presence of boats carrying thousands of foreigners including Rohingya refugees in national waters recently in the interest of national security, said analysts and experts on international politics.

The experts felt that it was Malaysia's main policy to give priority to security and public order before giving attention to the problems of others.

They also felt that this should issue a signal to the countries of origin of the refugees that Malaysia was a third world country and too small to accept the burden posed by the presence of these refugees.

A Geostrategist from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) Dr Azmi Hassan said if the presence and entry of the refugees were not prevented, the country would be burdened in terms of expenditure and infrastructure.

"Imagine that the transit camps and settlement centres currently are catering for thousands of immigrants with the government spending about RM30 to RM50 for each immigrant per day.

"If we accept any more refugees after this, the situation will go beyond control and will jeopardise national security and prosperity.

"We are a small nation and not a major power, in fact our capability to look after the new and existing groups is limited," he told Bernama.

It was reported that thousands of refugees from Myanmar and Bangladesh landed on Langkawi island before being placed in transit camps for deportation.

Azmi said Malaysia also issued a hidden signal that it could no longer afford to resolve the refugee issue if the other ASEAN member countries and the world were non-committal and were not looking for solutions to overcome the problem.

"This issue on repelling the refugees is sensitive. We are not like the other countries which just drove them off, at least we have transit camps, but for how long? When we accepted them previously, there was no appreciation for it, in fact we were even criticised," he said.

Meanwhile, Prof Madya Dr Ahmad Marthada Mohamed from Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) felt that the government's rejection of the refugee boats was prompted by national security consideration and not to merely neglect the humanitarian problem.

The Dean of the School of Law, Government and International Studies said other major

powers such as in Europe also did the same because they feared the threat on national security posed by the refugees.

"This group should be checked first. We don't know their background. That's why our policy is the same; if they are immigrants and require temporary shelter, we will give them, but not long-term protection," he said, adding that ignoring humanitarian issues was not in the national dictionary.

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