

Indonesia, Malaysia Agree To Provide Temporary Shelter To Stranded Migrants
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PUTRAJAYA, May 20 (Bernama) -- Indonesia and Malaysia have agreed to continue to provide humanitarian assistance, by offering temporary shelter to 7,000 irregular migrants still at sea.

The announcement was contained in a joint statement read by Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman after a meeting with his counterparts from Indonesia, Retno Marsudi and Thailand, General Tanasak Patimapragor here today to address the plight of the irregular migrants.

Anifah said the two countries agreed to provide the temporary shelter provided that the resettlement and repatriation process would be done in one year by the international community.

"In the meantime, Malaysia and Indonesia invite other countries in the region to join in this endeavour," he told a media conference together with his Indonesian counterpart Retno after the meeting.

Tanasak, who is also the Thai Deputy Prime Minister, did not attend the press conference to attend to urgent matters in his country.

Anifah said Thailand could not give their commitment in providing temporary shelters to the migrants as they needed to iron out its domestic law issues under the present circumstances.

"However, Malaysia and Indonesia cannot wait any longer, because our priority is to save them and cannot leave them in the sea. We have to reach out to them, and as for now, we have been sending supplies to them," he said.

According to the joint statement, these migrants would be sheltered in a designated area to be agreed upon by the affected countries and administered by a joint task force to be established by the affected countries.

The ministers in the joint statement had proposed that the international community would be responsible in providing Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand with the necessary support, particularly financial assistance to enable them to provide temporary shelter and humanitarian assistance to the irregular migrants currently at risk.

The statement said the three nations called upon the community to uphold their responsibility and urgently share the burden of providing the necessary support to Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand in addressing the problem.

The joint statement said that the root causes and other contributory factors to the recent

influx of irregular migrants should be immediately identified and addressed by the parties concerned.

"In this regard, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand remain prepared to continue to assist and work, in a constructive manner with the parties concerned," it said.

The statement said Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand would continue to uphold their responsibilities and obligations under international law and in accordance with their respective domestic laws, including the provision of humanitarian assistance to the irregular migrants.

The ministers also strongly condemned people smuggling and human trafficking and expressed their governments' determination to continue to take the necessary action, individually and collectively, to bring perpetrators of such heinous crimes to justice.

The statement said the enforcement agencies of the countries concerned would continue to share intelligence information in their efforts to combat people smuggling and human trafficking.

On ASEAN's role, the statement called on the 10-member bloc to play an active role in addressing the issue in an effective and timely manner, in the spirit of ASEAN solidarity.

The ministers further recommended the convening of an emergency meeting by the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime to address the crisis at hand.

They welcomed ASEAN's initiative to establish a regional framework to address trafficking in persons as well as provide assistance to victims through the ASEAN Convention on Trafficking in Persons, the statement said.

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