

Najib instructs navy to begin search, rescue of boat people
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The Royal Malaysian Navy will begin search and rescue of migrants stranded at sea off the peninsula's western coast and also assist in delivering humanitarian aid to the boat people, Datuk Seri Najib Razak said.

The prime minister tweeted that he had instructed the navy to proceed with humanitarian efforts for the migrants, ethnic Rohingyas from Myanmar and Bangladeshis, who have been stuck on boats after being barred from berthing on shore in Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand last week.

"I have instructed @tldm_rasmi & APMM to assist @MERCYMalaysia to deliver humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya refugees, by sea or land," Najib tweeted from his handle @NajibRazak today.

"It is basic human compassion that we ensure the hungry will be given food & water while the sick will be attended to with medical treatment & supplies," he said in another tweet.

"I have further ordered @tldm_rasmi and APMM to conduct search and rescue efforts on Rohingya boats. We have to prevent loss of life," he added, referring to the Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency.

Najib's remarks follow an agreement between Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand after ministerial tripartite talks yesterday to give temporary shelter to the migrants in Malaysia and Indonesia.

Malaysia and Indonesia agreed to provide refuge to the estimated 7,000 Rohingyas and Bangladeshis out at sea, but up to one year only, during which time both countries expect the international community to help in repatriation or relocation efforts.

Malaysia's Foreign Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman said yesterday while waiting for suitable shelters to be identified, Malaysia would send humanitarian aid out to those stranded on the boats.

The Bangladeshis on the boats are believed to be economic migrants, while the Rohingyas are escaping persecution from the Myanmar government, which has denied them citizenship, rendering them stateless. – May 21, 2015.

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