

# 'M'sia now a source of human trafficking'

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KOTA KINABALU: Malaysia is a recipient and transit country in terms of migrant smuggling but in recent years, it has become a source country.

Professor Dr Azizah Kassim, a fellow of the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), said as a country which hires many foreign workers either legally or illegally, Malaysia was also involved in human trafficking.

"These activities leave a lot of negative impact to the country and society," said Azizah, a member of the Anti Human Trafficking and Anti Migrant Smuggling Council (Mapo), here.

She said this during the closing of the 'Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Awareness Campaign' at the Postgraduate Auditorium in Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) organised by UMS in collaboration with UKM and the Counseling and Career Guidance Division.

"Smuggling affects the border security, while human trafficking challenges the principle of humanity and religion; degrading victims and confiscating their freedoms and rights to live.

"According to the International Labour Organisation, a total of 600,000 to 800,000 people worldwide fall victim to these activities every year.

"Since both these activities often occur in organised crime which involves ruthless and greedy international syndicates, it has great potential to undermine our implementation of national laws and to threaten political stability," said Azizah.

According to her, the growth of these activities has tarnished Malaysia's image internationally and bilateral relations between Malaysia and the countries people are trafficked from.

"For this reason, Malaysia amended the Anti Human Trafficking Act 2007 in October 2010 to the Anti Trafficking in Persons and Migrants Anti Smuggling Act.

"However the amendments didn't show many results even after four years since its implementation due to numerous obstacles," she said.

Azizah pointed out that lack of access to education, information and public awareness of the dangers of trafficking and smuggling are among the root causes of the issue.

"Therefore these activities should be eradicated as soon as possible and among ways of doing so is to get academicians to be involved in fighting this problem by disseminating information to students through awareness on human trafficking and migrant smuggling campaigns," she said.

"Students and graduates are our future leaders, hence it is necessary for them to understand the issue and work together to uphold the government's efforts to fight the dangers of human trafficking and smuggling," she said.

Meanwhile, UMS Student Affairs and Alumni Deputy Vice Chancellor Dr. Kasim Mansur said academicians have to be more creative in terms of finding the main reason why people become victims to these issues.

His speech was delivered by Head of Entrepreneurship in the School of Business and Economy, Mat Salleh Ayub.

"It is important to find a more effective solution to the issue," he said, adding it is therefore important to seek employment through legal channels.

"Even though the government implements numerous mechanism to curb this issue, economic slowdown might make those who are unaware of the dangers become vulnerable to syndicates," he said.

Towards this end, he said maximum cooperation from the public and law enforcement agencies is important to combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling.



Mat Salleh presenting token of appreciation to one of the panel speakers at the campaign. Azizah is seen at right.