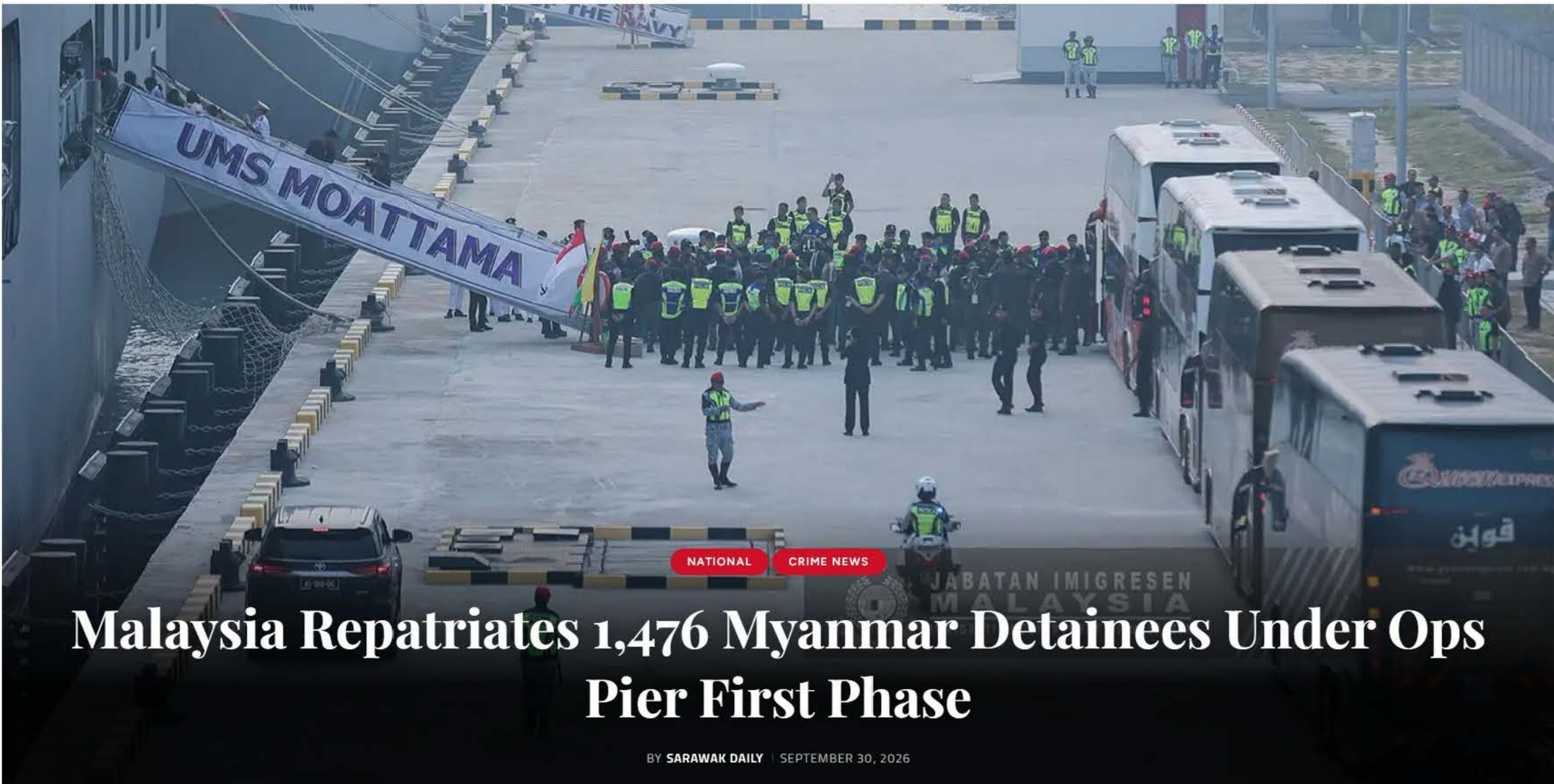




Malaysia Repatriates 1,476 Myanmar Detainees Under Ops Pier First Phase

NATIONAL CRIME NEWS

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Photo Credit: IIM Sabah/Handout via Sarawak Daily

LUMUT – Malaysia has repatriated 1,476 Myanmar detainees under the first phase of Ops Pier 1.0, beginning a phased programme agreed between Malaysia and Myanmar to return up to 5,000 Myanmar nationals.

The repatriation was carried out voluntarily on Sept 29, with the detainees brought from 14 immigration detention depots across the country before being transferred through Lumut.

The group consisted of 1,370 men, 79 women, 20 boys and 7 girls, aged between eight and 60.

46 buses carrying the detainees arrived in stages at the Manjung Municipal Council Stadium from as early as 4am, where authorities conducted verification procedures before the group proceeded to the Royal Malaysian Navy base in Lumut.

Ministry of Home Affairs Deputy Secretary-General (Policy and Control) Datuk Makhzan Mahyuddin said the individuals had first been identified by the Myanmar government, with the list subsequently submitted to Malaysia through a Diplomatic Note dated Aug 13.

He said the return of foreign nationals required the involvement and consent of their country of origin, particularly for matters involving citizenship verification, documentation, acceptance and the arrangements for repatriation.

“Government-level negotiations, which also involved the Prime Minister, have enabled Malaysia and Myanmar to reach an agreement on the phased repatriation of up to 5,000 Myanmar nationals,” he said.

Makhzan said the programme was being implemented on a voluntary, safe and responsible basis under procedures agreed by both governments.

The first phase is being coordinated by the Ministry of Home Affairs together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Security Council, Ministry of Defence and the Royal Malaysian Navy.

The Immigration Department is the lead operational agency, handling individual verification and matching, documentation, security arrangements and logistics.

Some of those involved did not have personal identification documents, requiring additional verification by Malaysian immigration authorities in cooperation with the Myanmar Embassy and Myanmar officials before travel documents could be issued.

The Myanmar government has provided three naval vessels for the return journey.

The UMS Moattama is serving as the main transport vessel, while the UMS King Sin Phyu Shin is being used as an escort vessel and the UMS Thanlwin as a hospital ship.

The three Myanmar vessels are being escorted by Royal Malaysian Navy ships KD Lekir and KD Teguh Samudera to a mutually agreed point within Malaysian waters before continuing towards Myanmar.

The escort arrangements also involve patrol boats from the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency and the Marine Police Force, together with helicopter-based aerial surveillance.

Makhzan said foreign naval vessels operating in Malaysian waters would remain under Malaysian naval escort until reaching the designated point.

“In operations involving a foreign nation’s naval vessels, the RMN escorts the ships throughout their time in Malaysian waters,” he said.

“We do not allow them to travel unaccompanied; the vessels are escorted right up to the designated point,” he added.

Security and regional implications were also discussed by Dr Noor Nirwandy Mat Noordin, a Universiti Teknologi MARA expert in information warfare and a security and political analyst.

He said the agreement demonstrated the use of diplomatic channels to address cross-border matters and highlighted the role of ASEAN Centrality in developing regional responses to regional issues.

Following the completion of Ops Pier 1.0, the Immigration Department will verify the outcome of the operation, while the Home Ministry will assess documentation, security, logistics and coordination between the agencies involved.

Makhzan said dates and numbers for subsequent phases had not yet been finalised. Further stages will depend on individual verification, operational readiness and continued coordination with the Myanmar government.

Both countries have agreed that the planned repatriation of up to 5,000 Myanmar detainees will take place in stages rather than through a single operation.

The first phase therefore establishes the initial operational framework for the wider programme, including identity verification, documentation, transportation and security coordination between Malaysian and Myanmar authorities.