

Copy Thailand in fighting human trafficking, Malaysia told

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has been urged to emulate Thailand in the management of human trafficking cases by allowing collaboration between enforcement agencies and civic groups.

Patchareeboon Sakulpitakphon, who works with the Asian chapter of the United States Agency for International Development (Usaid), told FMT the partnership would ensure transparency in case management.

She noted that Thai authorities had this year rescued more than 900 Myanmarese human trafficking victims and she attributed this to the success of collaboration between civic groups and the country's police and ministry of social welfare and human security.

"One side focuses on the investigations while the other focuses on the protection of the victims," she said.

Sakulpitakphon is the senior private sector engagement specialist in Usaid Asia's project against human trafficking.

Malaysia is said to be the destination for many human trafficking victims because of a high demand for cheap labour.

The US State Department's 2019 Trafficking in Persons report put Malaysia in its second-lowest ranking for not meeting the minimum standards in efforts to eliminate human trafficking.

Tenaganita CEO Glorene Das alleged that the police force and immigration and labour departments were not working in concert on the issue.

She told FMT she believed the agencies did not share the same understanding of what would constitute human trafficking.

This was causing overlaps and delays, she added.

"Police will just look at raids and arrests, and immigration will just look at detention," she said. "Then, you have NGOs looking at protection and you have the labour department looking only at unpaid wages."

Maszely Minhad, a former senior assistant commissioner of police, disagreed with Glorene, saying representatives from the various government agencies would meet every three months when he was still serving in the force.

Maszely told FMT the departments would discuss current issues regarding human trafficking and

plan joint efforts.

He said he would “totally disagree” with the suggestion that the different agencies worked in silos, but he acknowledged the possibility of isolated instances of lack of coordination, saying the agencies faced manpower problems.

Adrian Pereira, who heads a migrant rights organisation called North South Initiative, said the periodic inter-agency meetings were not sufficient and he called for access to reports of the sessions.

“What we need is transparency and integrity,” he told FMT. “Just having a meeting doesn’t mean anything. Where’s the report? Where’s the check and balance?”

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