

## Tawau a hotspot for smuggling

Published on: Thursday, September 12, 2019

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**TAWAU:** Tawau ranks the worst where smuggling of controlled and subsidised goods in the country is concerned and the enforcement units have been unsuccessful in tackling the serious problem.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry (KPDNHEP) enforcement director Datuk Iskandar Halim Sulaiman said a number of other methods and systems had to be used, including conducting regular monitoring by the enforcement officials here.

He said they need to be careful about enforcement measures so as not to jeopardise the people here, including on Sebatik Island, that is shared with Indonesia.

"In this regard, we will increase our assets in Tawau and possibly increasing the enforcement officers here so that this issue can be resolved as soon as possible," he said after a bilateral meeting of the KPDNHEP Enforcement Division and the Bukit Aman Marine Police Force at a hotel, here, Saturday.

Asked on whether the cases of smuggling of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) are masterminded by a transporter, an individual or a syndicate, Iskandar said the matter is still under investigation. But most of it was due to individuals taking the opportunity to commit sea-border crime.

This is because subsidised LPG price is very low at around RM26 or RM30 but when smuggled to neighbouring countries, the price can go up to RM60 per LPG cylinder and the smugglers earn lucrative profits.

Commenting on the meeting, Iskandar said the meeting was held every year to foster cooperation between the two parties, including coordinating efforts to ensure law enforcement, especially on subsidised goods.

“The meeting also discussed the effectiveness of the KPDHEP and Marine Police enforcement actions in terms of looking at enforcement structures throughout the country because we also facing similar issues in Kelantan, Johor and Sarawak.

“We discuss all aspects and after this meeting, we are expecting to be able to implement more coordinated enforcement while strengthening the cooperation of both parties,” he said.

According to Iskandar, among the success cases based on joint cooperation between KPDNHEP and Marine Police were opening 420 investigation papers under the Supply Control Act, last year, while this year, they registered a seizure of RM7.5 million, which saw 367 investigation papers opened with values at RM19.235 million, to date.

Meanwhile, Malaysia's Marine Police Commander SAC Mohd Yusoff Mamat said they are always ready to assist KPDNHEP and other agencies in tackling issues under the Supply Control Act, particularly smuggling at sea.

Currently, he said, the force is being restructured to add more division under operation intelligence soon as intelligence needs to be enhanced to address smuggling issues, particularly in Sabah, which has a wide coastline from Kota Kinabalu-Labuan to Tawau.

