

OPERATING FOR AT LEAST 6 MONTHS

# IMMIGRATION BUSTS MIGRANT SMUGGLING RING IN JOHOR

Suspected leader among 11 held in raids mounted in Kukup, Skudai and Batu Pahat

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**T**HE authorities dismantled a major migrant smuggling syndicate and arrested its suspected leader, a 38-year-old Indonesian man known as "Dedi", in a major night-time operation on Tuesday.

He was among 11 people, aged between 25 and 47, detained in a series of coordinated raids in Kukup, Skudai and Batu Pahat.

The syndicate is believed to have been smuggling undocumented Indonesians in and out of Johor by sea for at least six months.

The operation was preceded by three weeks of intelligence gathering.

Immigration officers, backed by the department's anti-people trafficking and anti-money laundering units, seized passports, cash, mobile phones, a multi-purpose vehicle and a boat.

Immigration Department director-general Datuk Zakaria Shaaban said the syndicate charged each migrant RM2,100 to leave of enter Malaysia by boat.

Among the 11 that were arrested were five Indonesian men and



Immigration officers inspecting record books as part of the operation that crippled a migrant smuggling syndicate. (Inset) A boat was among items seized in the raids. PIX TAKEN FROM IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT FACEBOOK

one woman, most of whom had no valid travel documents, while one was found to have overstayed, he said in a statement yesterday.

Investigations revealed that migrants would be housed in a hotel before they were transported by sea between Indonesia and Johor, Zakaria said.

Five suspects — three Indonesian men and two Malaysian women — are being investigated under Section 26A of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants Act 2007.

The others, all Indonesians, face charges under Section 6(3) of the Immigration Act 1959/63 for failing to have valid travel

documents.

All detainees were taken to the Immigration Department depot in Setia Tropika for further action.

Zakaria said the department would intensify efforts to clamp down on migrant smuggling operations to protect the country's borders.