

1,453 MIGRANTS DETAINED

Korean fugitive's arrest, blitz of 'flying passport' ring among Johor Immigration's major busts

JOHOR BARU: A South Korean man wanted under an Interpol Red Notice and a "flying passport" syndicate involving Vietnamese travel documents are among six major cases uncovered in Johor's immigration enforcement blitz.

The cases are part of a string of cross-border offences detected during 458 enforcement operations conducted between January and April, which led to the detention of 1,453 migrants for various immigration violations across the state.

State Immigration director Datuk Mohd Rusdi Mohd Darus said that on April 8, enforcement officers raided a luxury residence in Horizon Hills, Iskandar Puteri, and detained a South Korean man listed under an Interpol Red Notice for alleged fraud involving a face mask business scandal in his home country.

Rusdi said the man's passport had been revoked by the Repub-

lic of Korea, and investigations showed he had overstayed in Malaysia following the cancellation of his travel document.

He was also found to have harboured a Filipino woman who had overstayed her permitted period in the country.

The South Korean man was compounded RM6,000 for multiple offences, with the penalty issued following diplomatic requests from the Korean Embassy to expedite his removal for further action in his home country.

The Filipino woman was sentenced to four months' jail after pleading guilty to overstaying in Malaysia.

In another case on Jan 29, immigration officers dismantled a suspected "flying passport" syndicate operating from a unit at Residensi ARC in Taman Daya, Johor Baru.

A Malaysian man was detained after nine Vietnamese passports were found in his possession, be-



State Immigration director Datuk Mohd Rusdi Mohd Darus (third from left) showing the seized cellphones at the press conference on Johor's enforcement blitz at the Home Ministry complex in Johor Baru yesterday. NSTP PIC BY NAJMI NORAZAM

lieved to have been unlawfully held for endorsement and movement under an irregular arrangement.

Rusdi said the passports were kept without lawful authority and were suspected to be part of a wider illegal facilitation network involving foreign travel documents.

The suspect was charged under Section 12(1)(f) of the Passports Act 1966 for unlawful possession of other people's travel documents and fined RM1,000 to RM9,000 for each passport seized.

On March 31, a raid at Crescent Bay Suites here saw officers de-

tain a Mexican man, two Chinese men and a Hong Kong woman.

Thirteen passports of various nationalities were found in the Mexican man's possession.

Rusdi said the suspect was believed to have tampered with travel documents in an attempt to remain in Malaysia illegally.

He was charged under the Immigration Act for falsifying documents and unlawful possession of foreign passports.

The Hong Kong woman was found to have overstayed and was also in possession of another person's travel document, while the two Chinese men were found

without valid identification.

The Mexican man claimed trial and was remanded at the Johor Baru Correctional Centre at Ulu Choh pending further proceedings.

On April 29, immigration authorities dismantled a foreign-run online gambling syndicate operating from Puteri Harbour, resulting in the arrest of two Chinese men, a boy and five Thai women.

Authorities seized RM2,500 in cash, 34 mobile phones, seven computers and a printer believed to have been used in cross-border gambling activities targeting users in Thailand.