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IN THE NEWS
Media reports on trafficking cases and issues from the region and around the

CAMBODIA

- Malaysian authorities, in cooperation with the Cambodian Embassy in Malaysia, rescued and repatriated two men, originally from Takeo and Phnom Penh. Another male victim who had been enslaved on a fishing boat in South Africa for many years was repatriated to Cambodia too. A fourth victim, a woman who was tricked into marriage with a Chinese man in China’s Xinjiang province, returned to Cambodia later the same month.

- A 52-year-old broker from Jiangxi province of China was arrested in late March in Phnom Penh and charged with trafficking Cambodian women to China. The arrest was made following a complaint filed on 16 March by a victim’s husband.

- Cambodia delivered its first-ever convictions for organ trafficking, sentencing two men and a woman to a combined 35 years in prison for sending their relatives to have their
kidneys harvested in Thailand. The trio’s trafficking ring was uncovered in July 2014 when two of the suspect’s cousins filed police complaints saying they had been persuaded into going to Thailand to sell their kidneys.

CHINA

- The third sessions of the 12th National People’s Congress (NPC) and the 12th Chinese People Political Consultation Conference (CPPCC) took place in Beijing in March. In a significant development for counter trafficking efforts in China, the Anti-Trafficking Office of the MPS revealed that a proposal to draft specific trafficking legislation has been submitted to the Minister for his consideration.

LAO PDR

- Workshops on the development of the Human Trafficking Law have so far produced 90 articles, 13 sections and 8 sub-sections. This is yet to be approved by the National Assembly, but a public hearing meeting will be held by the government later this year.
- ILO arranged for training of trainers on pre-departure issues for migrant workers. Officials from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in the provinces, CSOs representatives and recruitment agencies all participated in the workshop.
- Lao Youth Union has organized the 5th National Youth Forum. The purpose is for the youth to share their experiences and knowledge about human trafficking. After the workshop, 5 youths will be selected to attend the Regional COMMIT Youth Forum and SOM/IMM meeting in Cambodia in April 2015.

MYANMAR

- The Central Body for Suppression of Trafficking In Persons announced that the Head of ATIPD will take a chair position for the Myanmar COMMIT Task Force.
- The Myanmar Navy carried back 102 Myanmar migrant workers who were illegally working in Malaysia after joining the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition 2015. The illegal migrant workers had been detained at the immigration detention centre in Malaysia.

THAILAND

- The National Legislative Assembly passed an amendment to the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, which will become effective after it is published in the Royal Gazette.
- According to MSDHS, 157 Lao nationals who fell victim to human trafficking were rescued in Thailand in 2014, an increase from the 103 rescued the year before. Those rescued were repatriated to Lao PDR under the MOU between the Lao and Thai governments.
- Following the investigation reports on slavery in seafood supply chains issued by the Associated Press (AP), Thailand is again under international pressure. The AP investigation coincided with the Thai media report on victims of labour exploitation in Ambon, Indonesia. This has prompted Thai authorities to coordinate with their Indonesian counterparts to obtain the release of detained workers and to repatriate 26
stranded workers to Thailand. An estimated 4,000 fishermen are thought to be stranded on Indonesian islands.

- Malaysian police will be setting up a special task force focusing on anti-human trafficking, drugs and firearms smuggling at the Malaysia-Thailand border.

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**IN THE NEWS**

**Slave-labour fish mixes in with Thai catch**
The Burmese slaves sat on the floor and stared through the rusty bars of their locked cage, hidden on a tiny tropical island thousands of kilometres from home. Just a few metres away, other workers loaded cargo ships with slave-caught seafood that clouds the supply networks of major supermarkets, restaurants and even pet stores in the United States. [Associated Press](https://www.associatedpress.com)

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**Embassy delegation begins assessing status of rescued fishermen in Indonesia**
Hundreds of fishermen rescued over the weekend from remote Indonesian islands got one step closer to home yesterday, as the Myanmar embassy in Jakarta began an inventory of names for repatriation. Officials from the embassy were dispatched on April 6 to Tual, Indonesia, where more than 300 migrant fishermen await repatriation assistance, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [Myanmar Times](https://www.myanmastimes.com)

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**Activists wait for government action**
Activists are taking a wait-and-see approach to the government’s vow to combat human trafficking. The government claims trafficking is a national priority and has vowed to improve coordination among officials and tighten legal procedures in trafficking cases. “Many governments in the past, including democratically elected ones, claimed they were trying to solve the problem of human trafficking, but there has been no improvement,” said Sompong Srakaew, the founding director of the Labour Rights Network Foundation. [Bangkok Post](https://www.bangkokpost.com)

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**Seeking better life, fleeing Rohingya become soft targets**
The last time U Yacob Ali spoke to his son was August 2014, when he received a panicked call on the family mobile from 20-year-old Salam Sayed begging his father for US$1500. Speaking to The Myanmar Times, 61-year-old U Yacob Ali said that his son described being beaten, starved, and burned with boiling water by a trafficking gang that had arranged his voyage from Rakhine State to Malaysia. $1500 was the price for securing his release. [Myanmar Times](https://www.myanmastimes.com)
Indonesia Frees 300 Men Found Enslaved on Island
More than 300 migrant fishermen who had been enslaved on trawlers for years rode those same vessels to freedom on Saturday after a daring rescue from a remote Indonesian island where they had lived in fear of being beaten or killed by their captors. After 17 hours overnight at sea, the men, mostly from Myanmar, filed off the boats and walked to the site of their new temporary home where they were finally safe. The New York Times

Film Turns Tide on Thai Human Trafficking
Thousands of Muslims on Phuket and along the Andaman coast are flocking to see a newly-released movie that urges an end to the trafficking of Rohingya boatpeople throughout Thailand. 'Ameen' is clearly aimed at turning Thailand's loyal Muslims away from human trafficking. Its screening follows closely on the grassroots uprising north of Phuket, where volunteers in the district of Takuapa are striving with no official support to end the trade in humans in Thailand. Phuketwan

PM vows anti-trafficking blitz, targets network bosses, corrupt officials
An integral part of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha's drive to combat human trafficking is improvements in coordination and cooperation between police, prosecutors and the courts. "The prime minister wants Thailand to adopt a systematic approach to address the root cause of human trafficking," an official source told the Bangkok Post. This means rooting out the leaders of trafficking networks as well as filing criminal charges against any government officials involved. Bangkok Post

Myanmar to take part in regional conference on curbing human trafficking
Myanmar will take part in a regional conference in Cambodia on cooperation in fighting against human trafficking scheduled for late this month, official sources said on Sunday. Senior officials of the 10th Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) will meet in Phnom Penh on April 28-29 on achievement of the COMMIT process, while an inter-ministerial meeting will follow on April 30 on future tasks. The six Greater Mekong Sub-region countries -- Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam are expected to issue a new joint declaration of COMMIT to explore cooperation with other regional organizations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Xinhua News Agency

Beijing struggles to rein in human traffickers
Bilateral agreements between Myanmar and China on human trafficking are facing practical difficulties in implementation in Yunnan and the inner provinces of China, police say. Police Brigadier General Win Naing Tun, head of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division, told The Myanmar Times yesterday that government-to-government mechanisms were not thoroughly enforced throughout China, including in Yunnan province, which borders on Myanmar. Myanmar Times

24-year-old is first to be charged under Prevention of Human Trafficking Act
A 24-year old Singaporean has become the first person charged under the new Prevention of Human Trafficking Act which came into effect in March, 2015. Muhammad Khairulanwar Rohmat is facing one charge under the new Act which was passed in Parliament last November. It serves to deter human trafficking including the sexual exploitation of individuals. Under the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act, first time offenders face up to 10 years in jail, a maximum fine of S$100,000 and the possibility of up to six strokes of the cane. Channel News Asia
NEW UN-ACT RESEARCH RELEASED

UN-ACT recently published two new research reports under its series Human Trafficking Trends in Asia:

1) "Migration experiences of Cambodian workers deported from Thailand in 2009, 2010 & 2012" draws on three data sets collected in 2009, 2010 and 2012, and thereby allows for the analysis of trends over time in the migration experiences of Cambodian workers deported from Thailand, including potential cases of human trafficking. Some of the key findings in the Cambodia report include:

1. There were marked improvements in the reported labour migration experiences over the three years of the research
2. Respondents that had worked on fishing boats were most likely to be coerced/deceived, exploited, and hence trafficked;
3. Gender, age, education and knowledge about human trafficking did not play a significant role in determining whether a respondent would be deceived/coerced, exploited, and trafficked;
4. Certain types of broker involvement in the recruitment and/or transportation of respondents were in some years associated with higher levels of human trafficking; other brokers, however, also played positive roles in respondents' labour migration experiences.

2) "Migration experiences of Lao workers deported from Thailand in 2013" draws on a data set collected at the Wang Tao–Chong Mek border crossing in 2013 involving 128 deportees. Frequent comparisons are made with the results of the Cambodia report above, where possible. Some of the key findings in the Lao PDR report include:

1. Of the 128 respondents, 4 cases met the criteria of being possibly trafficked (3.5%). All of these cases were males accounting for 6% of the male respondents;
2. The sector most affected by human trafficking in the study was agriculture, with 40% of those engaged in such work classifying as possibly trafficked. However, given the small sample size, this only included two individuals;
3. Gender, age, education levels and knowledge about human trafficking appeared unrelated to whether or not a respondent was deceived/cheated, exploited, and trafficked;
4. The main vulnerability factor to human trafficking in this study was whether a respondent used a broker to get to the Lao-Thai border. Whilst only 15% used brokers for such purposes, these were significantly more likely to have negative experiences in Thailand.

There is a lot more in both reports, including an analysis of socio-economic factors and other variables going beyond migration and human trafficking, which may be of interest to readers. The reports conclude with a number of concise recommendations for action to anti-trafficking stakeholders.

A full version of the Cambodian research can be downloaded [here](#) and the Laos report can be downloaded [here](#). Enjoy reading and please share widely!

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**UN-ACT UPDATES**

**COMMIT Senior Officials and Inter-Ministerial Meeting (COMMIT SOM/IMM)**

The COMMIT Process is gearing up for its Senior Officials and Inter-Ministerial Meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia next week, and so is UN-ACT as the COMMIT Secretariat.

In what promises to be an action-packed 3 days (28-30 April), COMMIT governments will adopt a new framework agreement (SPAIV) for their joint work over the next four years; discuss with civil society and youth about their support in the implementation of SPAIV; explore the media’s and the private sector’s role in anti-trafficking; and much more!

The regional COMMIT Youth Forum (27-30 April) involving 28 youth selected by their peers in all COMMIT countries, and a regional Civil Society Platform (27 April) bringing together NGOs working in anti-trafficking in the Mekong countries will also be convening in Phnom Penh before joining the COMMIT meeting.
The media advisory for the event, which is expected to welcome some 500 delegates from governments, UN agencies, CSOs and the donor community, has gone out to national and international media.

We will keep you all posted about the proceedings next week on Facebook as well as via Twitter under #COMMIT10