

MEDIA RELEASE



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION DHAKA

Australia assists the regional effort to combat people smuggling and human trafficking

Australia, working with Bangladesh and the UN, is this week delivering workshops to strengthen the region's ability to deal with the urgent challenge of people smuggling and human trafficking.

The workshops are taking place in Dhaka, and include participants from Australia, Bangladesh, Burma, India, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The initiatives, which further promote communication and mutual assistance among police forces in the region, arise from long-standing international efforts to strengthen police cooperation on people smuggling and human trafficking.

They also follow the statement by a number of regional governments in Bangkok on 29 May emphasising the need to resolve current irregular maritime migration in a comprehensive and sustainable manner.

Speaking to participants, Australian High Commissioner Greg Wilcock said "people smuggling and human trafficking transcend borders: no country can solve these problems alone. Australia will continue to work closely with our regional partners to deal with these challenges".

Mr Wilcock added that "Australia will also continue to support refugees and the victims of people smuggling and human trafficking in our region".

Australia co-chairs the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, to which Bangladesh and other regional partners contribute. The Bali Process fosters and coordinates regional action, including on law enforcement, protection and public information.

Australia is also a significant humanitarian donor, including to refugees and host communities in Bangladesh. On 29 May the Australian Government announced an additional \$5 million for humanitarian aid in Cox's Bazar district and Burma's Rakhine State.

Speaking to one of the workshops, Australian Federal Police (AFP) senior liaison officer Christopher Woods said that "the AFP recognises that cooperation across borders is essential to deterring criminal syndicates and disrupting people smuggling and human trafficking across the region. The AFP is proud to be a co-sponsor of this forum".

High Commissioner Greg Wilcock added "Australia welcomes this very timely opening to advance our work with Bangladesh, the UN and other friends on these serious challenges. We thank Bangladesh for hosting the workshop: this is a further indication of its resolve".

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