



129,000 people trapped in slavery in Malaysia

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Alarming figures

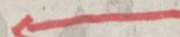
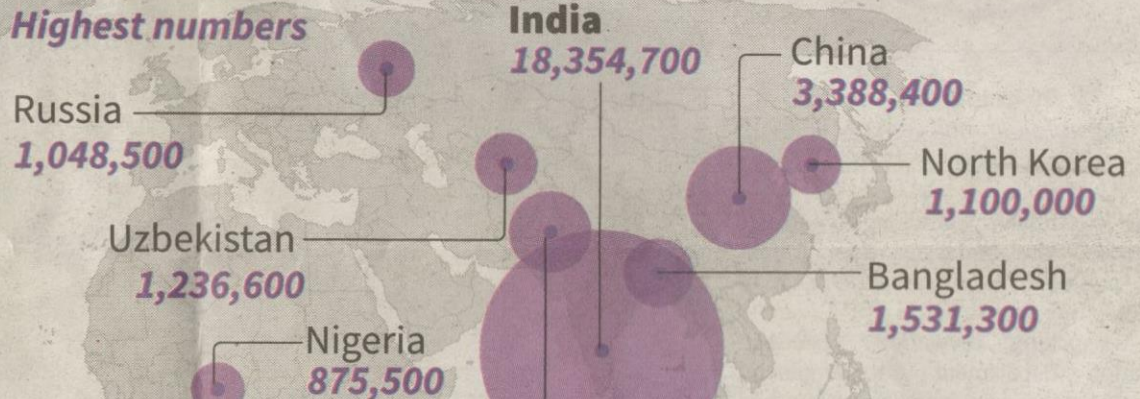
45.8 million people trapped in exploitative working and living conditions, says Australian study

Modern slavery

Situations of exploitation that people cannot leave due to:

- threats
- violence
- coercion
- abuse of power
- deception

Highest numbers



Report

2016
Global Slavery Index
Compiled by the
Walk Free Foundation

Highest rates

Per cent of population

North Korea	4.37
Uzbekistan	3.97
Cambodia	1.65
India	1.40
Qatar	1.36



Source: WFF © AFP

PETALING JAYA — Some 129,000 people are trapped in modern slavery in Malaysia, says the Global Slavery Index 2016.

The report, published by the Walk Free Foundation, placed Malaysia fifth highest in Southeast Asia behind Cambodia, Myanmar, Brunei and Thailand in terms of the number of slaves.

The study found both men and women had experienced forced labour in Malaysia's manufacturing, agriculture, food production and construction industries.

The high demand for live-in helpers in Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan had seen a large number of women migrants taking up the jobs.

But this was followed by reports of abuse and inhumane treatment of domestic workers including starvation, sexual abuse, extortion of recruitment fees, excessive unpaid overtime, withholding wages and confiscating passports.

The discovery of human trafficking camps along the Thai-Malaysia border in May last year brought to light the trade and exploitation of Rohingya people.

Mass grave sites were found in several areas including behind the police station at Padang Besar, just 500 metres from the border crossing manned by both Thailand and Malaysia.



Through our responsible use of power, strength of conviction, determination and collective will, we all can lead the world to end slavery."

— Australian billionaire mining magnate and philanthropist Andrew Forrest

Thailand responded by arresting 52 suspects including politicians, community leaders, businessmen and smuggling and trafficking syndicate members.

In the Asia Pacific region, Malaysia ranked 11th for slavery prevalence.

Walk Free Foundation is an initiative set up by Australian billionaire mining magnate and philanthropist Andrew Forrest in 2012 to draw attention to the issue.

The study also showed that more than 45 million men, women and children globally are trapped in modern slavery — far more than previously thought — with two-thirds in the Asia-Pacific.

It compiled information from 167 countries with 42,000 interviews in 53 languages to determine the prevalence of the issue and government responses.

It suggested that there were 28 per cent more slaves than estimated two years

ago, a revision reached through better data collection and research methods.

The report said India had the highest number of people trapped in slavery at 18.35 million, while North Korea had the highest incidence (4.37 per cent of the population) and the weakest government response.

Some 124 countries have criminalised human trafficking in line with the UN Trafficking Protocol and 96 have developed national action plans to coordinate the government response.

However, Forrest said in an AFP report that more robust measures were needed.

"We call on governments of the top 10 economies of the world to enact laws, at least as strong as the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015, with a budget and capability to ensure organisations are held to account for modern slavery in their supply chains, and to empower independent oversight," he said in the AFP report.

"I believe in the critical role of leaders in government, business and civil society.

"Through our responsible use of power, strength of conviction, determination and collective will, we all can lead the world to end slavery."

In terms of absolute numbers, Asian countries occupy the top five for people trapped in slavery.

Behind India was China (3.39 million), Pakistan (2.13 million), Bangladesh (1.53 million) and Uzbekistan (1.23 million).

As a per centage of the population, Uzbekistan (3.97 per cent) and Cambodia (1.65 per cent) trailed North Korea, which the study said was the only nation in the world that has not explicitly criminalised any form of modern slavery.

The report also tracked actions and responses to the problem, with governments at the forefront including the United States, Australia, and a host of European nations including Britain, Portugal and Norway.

Those with the weakest action included Iran, Hong Kong and China.

It cited Croatia, Brazil and the Philippines as countries to take positive steps since the last Global Slavery Index in 2014, while praising India for making significant progress in addressing the problem.