

Bangladeshi fisherman testifies in human trafficking case hearing

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PUBLIC prosecutors yesterday brought a 23-year-old Bangladeshi fisherman to testify in the first session of the advance hearing into the human-trafficking case involving Rohingya and other migrants at Bangkok's Ratchadaphisek Criminal Court.

The hearing was held with only defendants, witnesses, public prosecutors and defence lawyers present. The court said that relatives and media members could attend and listen to the testimonies via a live closed-circuit TV broadcast in another room, but they could not record or publish the content as it could affect the trial if other witnesses in the case knew it.

Ninety suspects were brought from detention facilities to attend the session.

The court had set the advance hearing on the public prosecutor's side in eight sessions, which would be held from December 24-25, January 7-8, and January 12-15.

The advance hearing session was part of the case against 90 suspects, including Banjong

Pongpol, the former mayor of Songkhla's Muang Padang Besar, former Satun Provincial Administrative Organisation president Pajjuban "Ko Tong" Angchotephan, and former Army special adviser Lt-General Manas Khongpaen.

The suspects are facing 16 charges including violation of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, the Act of Suppression and Prevention of Transnational Criminal Organisations and the Immigration Act. The case was initially heard at Songkhla's Na Thawee Provincial Court but was transferred to the newly established Criminal Court's Human Trafficking Case Division on October 10.