



**MEDIA STATEMENT
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA (SUHAKAM)**

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PRESS STATEMENT

KUALA LUMPUR (7 JULY 2023) - The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) is actively advocating for human rights issues in Malaysia, with a particular focus on addressing violations such as forced labour. This pressing issue requires collaborative efforts from key stakeholders, including government agencies, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Since 2020, SUHAKAM has been working on this issue through organizing a series of consultations with stakeholders in the medical supply, construction, manufacturing, and hybrid plantation industries. The consultations raised several issues, including the elimination of recruitment fees, corruption in the recruitment chain, strengthening of labour inspections, working conditions, child labour, and more.

SUHAKAM also visited 17 plantations throughout Malaysia and recorded observations highlighting issues such as workers' lack of understanding regarding employment contracts, high recruitment fees, absence of annual leave and complaint mechanisms, employers retaining passports, and poor conditions of accommodation.

SUHAKAM believes that enhancing the complaint mechanism is crucial and proposes the development of booklet multilingual manual to be distributed to all migrant workers upon their arrival in Malaysia. This resource would not only serve as a guide but also emphasize their rights and responsibilities. With SUHAKAM included as a contact agency, migrant workers would have better accessibility and assistance throughout the process.

This year, SUHAKAM has continued its advocacy, starting with Johor and planning to extend it to other states, including Sabah and Sarawak, to provide a platform for discussing challenges, potential solutions, and the way forward in addressing forced labour in Malaysia.

Addressing forced labour requires a collaborative effort from all parties. Merely having laws, policies, and regulations will not be effective without full compliance from industries and robust enforcement by government agencies. It is imperative for businesses to ensure that their operations align with domestic laws and international standards. While there is a framework of policies and laws in place to deter forced labour, ultimately, relevant stakeholders need to consider the business benefits of preventing forced labour incidences.

Therefore, SUHAKAM believes there is a need to further strengthen engagement with key stakeholders, to facilitate discussions among countries in the region, share best practices, and encourage collaboration in addressing the challenges posed by forced labour in the context of migration. SUHAKAM can serve as a focal point to collate information and reach out to the government, acting as a bridge between stakeholders.

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Prof. Dato' Dr. Rahmat Mohamad
Chairman
Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
7 July 2023