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**SUHAKAM HOSTS 2ND SEANF TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING,
STRENGTHENING REGIONAL COOPERATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

KUALA LUMPUR (31 JULY 2026) - The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM), in its capacity as Chair of the South East Asia National Human Rights Institutions Forum (SEANF) for 2026, successfully hosted the 2nd Technical Working Group (TWG) Meeting of SEANF, a side event and a study visit from 21 to 23 July 2026 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The 2nd TWG Meeting brought together SEANF member institutions, with in-person participation from the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHRP), the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT), and Provedor de Direitos Humanos e Justiça (PDHJ), Timor-Leste, as well as virtual participation from the Indonesian National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) and the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC).

The meeting was officially opened by SUHAKAM Commissioner Mr Abdul Kadir Jailani Ismail, who underscored that trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling remain among the most pressing human rights challenges confronting Southeast Asia. He emphasised that the role of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) extends beyond advocacy to promoting accountability, strengthening protection mechanisms and fostering regional cooperation.

Over the two-day meeting, SEANF members exchanged updates on key developments, initiatives and challenges since the 1st TWG Meeting of SEANF 2026. Discussions focused on the continued implementation of the 2022–2026 SEANF Strategic Plan, particularly its four strategic priorities: ensuring human rights remain central in a post-pandemic environment; advancing business and human rights; preventing torture and other forms of ill-treatment; and strengthening SEANF as a credible, independent and effective regional network.

In line with its lead role under Strategic Priority 4, SUHAKAM reaffirmed its commitment to advancing discussions on strengthening SEANF's governance, including advocating for a two-thirds majority voting mechanism where consensus cannot be reached on specific key matters. The meeting also deliberated on several emerging regional human rights issues, including the proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment, the rights of older persons, inter-NHRI cooperation on statelessness, and the human rights situation in Sabah.

On 22 July 2026, SUHAKAM hosted a side event entitled "Forum on the Refugee and Trafficking in Persons Crises in Southeast Asia: Challenges and Opportunities for Regional Cooperation." Held alongside the TWG Meeting, the forum provided a regional platform for participants to discuss emerging trends, protection gaps and challenges relating to refugees, asylum-seekers and trafficking in persons in Southeast Asia. The discussions also enhanced understanding of the complementary roles of NHRIs, government agencies, international organisations and civil society organisations in protecting affected individuals, while identifying practical opportunities for regional cooperation through SEANF, including information sharing, case referrals, joint advocacy, capacity-building and follow-up initiatives.



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In conjunction with the forum, SUHAKAM organised a study visit to Baitul Mahabbah Nilai, providing delegates with an opportunity to better understand the Government's temporary arrangement for refugee children below the age of 12, which reflects efforts to move children out of immigration detention, as recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in its February 2026 Concluding Observations to Malaysia.

The meeting concluded with a closing address by SUHAKAM Vice-Chairman Datuk Hajah Mariati Robert, who called on ASEAN Member States to strengthen responsibility-sharing in responding to forced displacement and deepen regional cooperation to prevent trafficking in persons, protect victims and survivors, and ensure accountability. She further emphasised SEANF's important role in fostering collaboration among governments, NHRIs, international organisations and civil society to ensure that forced displacement, statelessness and trafficking in persons are recognised not merely as domestic concerns but as shared regional human rights challenges requiring sustained collective action.

The successful convening of the 2nd TWG Meeting of SEANF reaffirmed the commitment of member institutions to strengthening SEANF as a credible, independent and effective regional human rights network. The meeting concluded with SEANF members reaffirming their commitment to enhance regional solidarity, strengthen cooperation in addressing emerging human rights challenges, and uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and justice across Southeast Asia.

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**Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
31 July 2026**