

Seksualiti Merdeka ban 'a tragic day' for Malaysia

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The organisers of Seksualiti Merdeka have described the decision by the police to impose a blanket ban on its activities as a tragic day for the country.

Pang Khee Teik, its co-coordinator Pang Khee Teik (left) said basically, the ban means Malaysia has declared compassion and understanding as illegal.

"What we are working on is nothing illegal, as we only want to promote understanding (of the minority groups). This ban has only strengthened my resolve to reinforce and continue to give hope to these minority groups," Pang said.

"We are not doing anything illegal as we hope to provide support and care for these people, and at the same time, promote understanding.

"The country has gone crazy (by imposing the ban). Malaysia is merely succumbing to pressures by some people who chose not to recognise the rights bestowed on these oppressed people."

Asked what the organisers would do following the ban declared by the police, Pang said they have yet to decide on their next course of action.

Stop the intimidation, police told

Seksualiti Merdeka is an annual festival celebrating the human rights of people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. It is backed by several NGOs, including the Bar Council, Amnesty International and Suaram.

It was scheduled to be held at the Annexe Gallery of the Pasar Seni (former Central Market) in Kuala Lumpur from Nov 9 to 13.

Suaram's spokesperson E Nalini also condemned the ban.

"We want the police to stop this intimidation and respect minority rights. It is their freedom of expression and opinion to have the Sensualiti Merdeka festival.

"The government should be protecting and promoting their rights, instead of violating them," Nalini said.

Meanwhile, according to Bernama, the deputy director-general of the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (Jakim) Razali Shahabudin said the programme could have negative effects and raise the risk of HIV and Aids infection among Malaysians.

He said in a statement that such activities were also against the norms and lifestyle of the people of various religions in the country.

Festival taints 'merdeka' word

The director-general of the Institute of Islamic Understanding (Iktim) Nik Mustapha Nik Hassan said the programme was clearly uncivilised and deviated from human behaviour and degraded human being as being worse than animals.

In Shah Alam, according to the news agency, Umno information head Ahmad Maslan said it was more appropriate for the Seksualiti Merdeka programme to be known as 'deviationist sexuality' and it tainted the word 'merdeka'.

Ahmad, who is also deputy minister in the Prime Minister's Department, said sexual liberty, such as gay and lesbianism not only went against Islamic teachings but also the teachings of other religions.

"Don't be bound to the Western ways which legalised homosexuality, same sex marriages... going against the norms of the country which made Islam as the federal religion," he told reporters after opening a seminar.