

National Action Plan launched

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Move aims to eliminate forced labour in country by 2030

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PETALING JAYA: The first-ever National Action Plan was launched here with the aim of eliminating forced labour in Malaysia by 2030.

Developed by the Human Resources Ministry with the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the National Action Plan on Forced Labour (NAPFL) 2021-2025 focuses on awareness, enforcement, labour migration as well as access to remedy and support services to eliminate forced labour in Malaysia over the next few years.

NAPFL was launched here yesterday by Human Resources Minister, Datuk Seri M. Saravanan, witnessed by government representatives,

workers and employers representatives, as well as civil society and development partners.

ILO Asia and the Pacific regional director Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa welcomed Malaysia's commitment to eradicate forced labour, and called the National Action Plan a "significant step in the right direction".

"NAPFL is an important tool to prevent and eliminate forced labour practices in Malaysia and to protect its victims.

"While workers are the primary beneficiaries, enterprises should also gain more sustainable and human rights-centered business practices to strengthen their global competitiveness.

"Developing this action plan has been a huge undertaking. The pro-

cess itself strengthened cooperation among different stakeholders.

"It has contributed to increasing knowledge and awareness about the issues, and the approaches to deal with them," she said.

NAPFL will set out actions to be carried out by the government, employers, workers' organisations, and civil society.

It is hoped that systematic implementation of the recommended measures will improve the legal compliance and enforcement against unfair or forced labour, while strengthening recruitment practices.

At the same time, victims of forced labour will be provided with improved access to remedy, support and protective services.

In addition, this will also create

awareness and understanding of forced labour among workers, employers and the government, young people and the general public.

A review will take place in 2023 to take stock of progress on the NAPFL implementation.

At a press conference following the launch, Saravanan revealed that he had turned down a request from Bangladesh to allow 2,000 of its recruitment agencies to send in workers to Malaysia.

"We have to approach this matter carefully, as opening the doors wide at this stage will lead to a deluge, and risk turning Malaysia into a 'dumping ground' for migrant workers," he said, adding that the matter also needs to be referred to the Cabinet.