

Asean leaders ink declaration
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By MERGAWATI ZULFAKAR
In Phnom Penh

Asean leaders have adopted the Asean Human Rights Declaration at the 21st Asean Summit here.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak signed on behalf of the Malaysian Government at the Peace Palace yesterday where the summit is being held.

The Asean Human Rights Declaration states that every person is entitled to certain rights regardless of race, gender, age, language, religion and political opinions, among others.

The declaration also states that the rights of women, children, elderly and disabled persons and migrant workers are an integral and indivisible part of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Addressing concerns that the declaration was not up to international standards, Najib said Malaysia's stand was that the country had its own norm and values.

"In fact we feel that the declaration has points which are better than the universal declaration of human rights," he told the Malaysian media after attending the first day of the summit.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia rejected any inclusion of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights in the declaration.

"It depends on your values and norms and we reject LGBT but it does not mean any weakening in terms of the principle of human rights," he said.

"The leaders did not discuss Malaysia's stand and they have accepted it. We have signed it and as far as we are concerned Asean countries have accepted (our stand)."

Asean secretary-general Surin Pitsuwan said the adoption of the declaration was a major development and member states were ready to commit themselves to it.

"Asean shall pursue the protection and promotion of human rights in the region in our own way and also try to maintain the highest standard as expressed in various declarations and instruments of the international community," Surin told a press conference here.

On his meeting with Myanmar President Thein Sein, Najib said he had expressed Malaysia's concern over sectarian violence which had resulted in internally displaced persons in Rakhine state.

"Malaysia noted that while Rakhine is a very sensitive issue to Myanmar, it has generally been very forthcoming and cooperative to concerns raised by Malaysia," he said.

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