

**Save our Tasik Chini, Orang Asli plead to Najib**  
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**By Nicholas Wong**

The Tasik Chini Orang Asli community has appealed directly to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to resolve their woes over the degradation of the famous Pahang lake.

The group submitted a memorandum containing their recommendations at the Prime Minister's Office in Putrajaya this morning.

najib putrajaya 280212The memorandum was received by Najib's senior private secretary Mohamad Amir Harun, as the prime minister was unable to make it for the appointment.

The Orang Asli are appealing to Najib directly as Tasik Chini falls under the Pekan constituency.

As the Pekan MP, they said, Najib has not visited the area since the time he became defence minister.

They want him to use his political clout as prime minister to chair a commission to receive recommendations from an "action-oriented committee" to institute a "policy work plan".

The group is primarily calling for the rehabilitation of the lake, which the residents there say is the main cause for the deterioration of their quality of life.

In addition, economic activities such as illegal logging, plantations and mining in the vicinity of the lake area have further damaged the livelihood of the people there.

Tourism has also suffered as a result of the environmental deterioration, said Transparency International-Malaysia secretary-general Josie Fernandez.

NONEAdded Malaysian Nature Society executive director Mohamed Shah Redza, "Tasik Chini is the only Unesco bio-reserve in the country, but they cannot even go into the water as they will get rashes. The fish have worms."

Orang Asli representative Ismail Muhamad (left) said he was "disappointed" with what he called the "hassle of bureaucracy" when it came to seeking help from the authorities.

"I still love BN, but BN should not toy with me. Our community still sits at the lowest level in society," Ismail said.

Citing the budget allocations for the Orang Asli in previous years, he noted that much of the money had not reached the community itself.

Among other things, the recommendations included in the memorandum are:

- \* To improve the standard of living of the Orang Asli
- \* To rehabilitate Tasik Chini;
- \* To gazette the water catchment area as the boundary, and the land, water body and traditional territory of the Orang Asli;
- \* To impose stringent guidelines on mining activities in order to minimise its environmental impact; and

\* To implement the restoration of forests.

The Orang Asli community in the Tasik Chini area, comprising the Jakun and Semelai tribes, live in 11 villages there and number around 3,000 to 5,000 people.

The memorandum specifies a six-month period for a response to their recommendations and proposed actions.

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