



Sarawakians have only themselves to blame
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"Whose fault is it that Barisan Nasional wins at every election giving Abdul Taib Mahmud the chance to continue ruling Sarawak as chief minister?"

After 47 years of Merdeka, said Kayan Cultural Association president Miku Loyang, it is the fault of the Sarawakians themselves that their communities are now unable to even step foot into their ancestors' land because of the Bakun Dam development.

"Who is wrong? No one but us, even though the government (BN) is like this, we still vote it in every general election," said Miku, 68 (*right*), from Balui Liko, Ulu Bakun, who is now resettled in Sungai Asap.

"I am angry. I want to vote against them. We will quietly and nicely place our crosses in the right slots," added Miku, who was a civil servant and became Belaga councillor before his retirement.

However, Miku, who has been a polling agent before, conceded that it was massive challenge to register voters in the interior of Sarawak due to the blockades placed by logging companies along the roads leading to the villages.

He said that many were not registered as voters and that change could come about only when there were enough young voters casting their ballots.

Miku and three others, including his spouse Saran Juna, 61, a traditional Ngajat dancer, son-in-law Bengo Telang, 56 and Kuit Kilah, 55, from the Penan community, were in Penang to perform several songs and dances at an event organised by Malaysian Elections Observers Network (MEO-Net).

Voter registration, a sign of the times

MEO-Net coordinator, social activist Ong Boon Keong, said the performance, attended by about 100 people, was also part of the group's Sarawak Road Show first anniversary celebration.

The road show organises monthly trips to the state's interior to conduct voter registration and education and is supported by other groups, including Malaysian Trades Union Congress, Tanjung Bungah Residents Association, Suaram Penang, Penang Graduates Youth Association, Penang Chinese Journalists Association and Kenyalang Power Initiative.

The performers are in Kuala Lumpur today and will be performing at the Central Market Annex before leaving for Sarawak tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Kiut, (*right*) formerly from Murum and now resettled in Sg Asap with 40 other Penan families, said he has not met with any YBs (parliamentarians or state assemblypersons) although he has been voting for years.

"Where are they, the chief minister and the YBs? They do not seem visible though I have been voting for them before," said Kiut, who



nows lives in a makeshift chicken coop and has untold sad stories to share about his life in Sarawak.

Telang, a Kayan farmer resettled in Sungai Asap, shared his heart-rending tale about the daily sufferings of the indigenous communities since the Bakun Dam project shattered their lives.



He said Malaysia Day held no meaning for him, although he should be very happy that Malaysia, including Sabah and Sarawak, had gained independence from the British 47 years ago.

"I cannot begin to tell you how sad our stories are, words cannot describe our sadness, we have been cheated over and over again," said Telang, who sings traditional Kayan songs.

"Our homes have disappeared and we cannot even hunt or gather food for our families; we have not been compensated when they took our homes away and now we are asked to pay for a poorly constructed house in Sungai Asap," he lamented.

"There is no point for Sarawak to be independent within Malaysia (if the situation is like this for the indigenous communities), there is no difference from being under the colonial rule of the British," Telang (*left*) added.

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