

Only elite Dayaks to benefit from Putrajaya's Bumiputera plan, says Sarawak DAP Malaysian Insider
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BY DESMOND DAVIDSON

Only the powerful and elite among Dayaks will benefit from the latest Bumiputera economic agenda announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, said Dayak Consultative Council chairman Dr John Brian Anthony.

"The ordinary Dayaks? Not one bit. I don't believe the Dayaks in the rural areas, the poor Dayaks, are likely to benefit from this latest Bumiputera agenda," Dr John Brian, who is Sarawak DAP's key advisor on Dayak matters, said today.

"We have seen it all in past agendas and so many (economic) packages," he said, adding that it would benefit Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Alfred Jabu and Land Development Minister Tan Sri Dr James Masing "but not the ordinary Dayaks".

Dr John Brian said the new agenda won't turn ordinary Dayaks into millionaires.

Last Saturday, Najib launched the Bumiputera Economic Empowerment Council which has a five-pronged thrust to strengthen Bumiputeras in the fields of capital, corporate sector equity ownership, non-financial assets, entrepreneurship and commerce, and service delivery and ecosystem.

Analysts see this as Najib's attempt to shore-up support ahead of the Umno party polls next month.

Dr John Brian questioned the prime minister's decision to have such a policy in a multiracial country.

"Is this correct? Can the prime minister of a multiracial country do as he wishes?"

"He seems to act as if the country is just for Bumiputeras," he said.

He cited failure of the delivery system as a reason why the Dayaks are not likely to rejoice from the new initiatives.

He also pointed to failure of Sabah and Sarawak students to take up the 1,000 scholarships available annually to enable them to study in local universities.

Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Joseph Entulu has recently disclosed that from 2008 to last year, only half of the scholarships were taken up by students from the two states. The unclaimed scholarships were given to those from West Malaysia.

Sarawak PKR women chief Nurhanim Mokhsen agreed with Dr John Brian to a certain extent but believed that any Bumiputera agenda would work if the government is transparent in its implementation.

"We welcome it as it would help in the advancement of the Bumiputeras. But what we are concerned about is how it's going to help them.

"Past agendas have not produced the desired results because there was no transparency in managing these initiatives," she said.

Nurhanim said the initiatives had been riddled by cronyism and political interference that "benefitted only a small group of people".

"There must be transparency, for example, in how contracts are given, who are awarded and why. There must be open tenders."

She said without transparency, the Bumiputera agenda would be just another rebranding exercise. - September 17, 2013.

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