

If Najib's serious about Bumi agenda, look at Orang Asli, says DAP analyst
Malaysian Insider
Sept 18 , 2013
BY RITA JONG

If Datuk Seri Najib Razak is serious about his Bumiputera economic empowerment agenda, he should pay close attention to a recent Suhakam report documenting the many serious obstacles faced by Orang Asli in Malaysia. If he is not, then the country will suffer for it, according to a DAP political analyst and member of Parliament.

Serdang MP Dr Ong Kian Ming (pic) has raised the issue because he believes Najib's main agenda in this undertaking is to strengthen his position in Umno before the party polls next month.

He said the Umno president is not sincere in improving the welfare of the Bumiputeras and that will have serious long-term negative consequences on the economic and political landscape of the country.

To really make it work, the Prime Minister should instead focus his attention on the marginalised communities, starting with the indigenous people, including those in Sabah and Sarawak.

Ong said in a statement today that Najib must pay heed to and implement "the 18 recommendations by Suhakam on Land Rights of the Indigenous Peoples including the setting up of a National Commission on Indigenous Peoples".

This report highlights the need for the government to adhere to various international conventions which have been ratified and which have direct relevance to the indigenous people, including the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Convention on the Elimination of the all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Among the 18 recommendations made by Suhakam were establishing a Native Title Court of Special Court to deal with the backlog of native land rights cases, respecting their rights to their lands, territories and resources, conducting a comprehensive review of the Orang Asli Development Department, and establishing a National Commission on Indigenous Peoples to advise the government on related issues.

"In his recent speech in announcing the Bumiputera agenda, Najib had referred to his 2010 Umno General Assembly speech where he said, perhaps half seriously, that the Jakuns and Sakai natives are Malays and have been absorbed as Malays," Ong said.

Ong, however, pointed out that Najib made no reference to Suhakam's report and its recommendations.

He said if Najib and his Cabinet continue to ignore the findings and recommendations of this report, it will be prove that the government is not serious about addressing the true needs of the marginalised Bumiputera communities.

"Najib and the government will be seen as being more interested in reviving a failed Mahathirist, crony-driven model of Bumiputera economic empowerment," Ong added.

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

It was reported two days ago that the Dayaks from Sarawak also felt only the powerful and elite Dayaks would benefit from the agenda and not the ordinary folk or those from the rural areas.

Dayak Consultative Council chairman Dr John Brian Anthony pointed out the new agenda would not turn ordinary Dayaks into millionaires. – September 18, 2013.

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