

**EDITOR, NEWS DESK**

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**SUHAKAM CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE PROTECTION OF ORANG ASLI  
CUSTOMARY LAND RIGHTS IN MARAN**

**KUALA LUMPUR (29 JULY 2026)** - The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) expresses its deep concern over the ongoing land dispute involving the Orang Asli community of Kampung Sungai Cot, Maran, Pahang. While recognising the State Authority's powers over land administration, SUHAKAM emphasises that such powers must be exercised in accordance with the Federal Constitution, the rule of law and Malaysia's human rights obligations.

Orang Asli native customary land is far more than an economic asset. It is intrinsically linked to their identity, culture, spirituality, traditional knowledge and survival as Indigenous Peoples. The loss of customary lands therefore threatens not only livelihoods but also the continued existence of their cultural heritage and way of life. SUHAKAM has consistently maintained that the customary land rights of the Orang Asli deserve meaningful recognition and effective protection. Existing legal principles recognise that customary rights arising from the longstanding occupation and use of ancestral lands warrant protection. The Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954 should therefore be implemented in a manner that gives full effect to its protective purpose and safeguards the rights and welfare of Orang Asli communities.

SUHAKAM further reiterates that development cannot come at the expense of the fundamental rights of Indigenous Peoples. Economic development and investment must be pursued in a manner that respects human rights, protects customary land rights and ensures that no community is left behind. This is also reflected in Malaysia's National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAPBHR), spearheaded by the Prime Minister's Department together with relevant ministries, which recognises respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights and environmental protection as essential components of responsible business conduct. Economic interests should never override the rights of Orang Asli and the protection of their customary lands.

Consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), decisions affecting Indigenous Peoples' lands, territories and resources should only proceed following meaningful consultation and with their Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). Consultation that occurs only after decisions have effectively been made cannot satisfy the requirements of genuine participation or respect for their rights.

SUHAKAM is particularly concerned that the use of criminal enforcement in the context of unresolved customary land disputes risks escalating tensions and undermining public confidence in efforts to achieve a just resolution. Where there are legitimate and unresolved claims over customary lands, priority should be given to dialogue, mediation and fair legal processes rather than enforcement measures that may further marginalise Orang Asli communities.

SUHAKAM therefore calls upon the Pahang State Government to:

- i. immediately engage in meaningful dialogue with the affected Orang Asli community and all relevant stakeholders;
- ii. suspend any activities that may permanently affect the disputed customary lands until the claims have been independently and fairly resolved;
- iii. ensure that any future development affecting Orang Asli customary lands complies with the principle of FPIC; and
- iv. strengthen mechanisms for recognising, protecting and gazetting Orang Asli customary lands in accordance with the Federal Constitution, domestic jurisprudence and international human rights standards.



## **MEDIA STATEMENT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA (SUHAKAM)**

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SUHAKAM also urges the Federal Government to accelerate comprehensive legal and policy reforms relating to Orang Asli land rights. The recurring nature of such disputes demonstrates the urgent need for a coherent national framework that provides legal certainty while respecting the rights, dignity and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples.

Respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights is not an obstacle to development. Rather, it is the foundation of sustainable, inclusive and equitable development. Malaysia's progress should never come at the cost of dispossessing Indigenous communities of the lands that have sustained them for generations. SUHAKAM remains ready to facilitate constructive dialogue with all parties and to continue advocating for solutions that uphold justice, human rights and the rule of law.

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**Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)  
29 July 2026**