

Academics pan MP's 'half-baked' idea of Mitra-like unit for Dayaks

freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/10/31/academics-pan-mps-half-baked-idea-of-mitra-like-unit-for-dayaks

FMT Reporters

31 October 2025



Selangau MP Edwin Banta had proposed that an agency like Mitra be set up to coordinate socio-economic programmes for the Dayak community.

PETALING JAYA:

Two Dayak academics have shot down a Gabungan Parti Sarawak MP's proposal for the government to set up an agency like the Malaysian Indian Transformation Unit (Mitra) to uplift the Dayak community.

Political analyst Jayum Jawan of the Academy of Sciences Malaysia described the proposal floated by Selangau MP Edwin Banta as "a half-baked idea" that was unnecessary.

He said that unlike the Indian community, the Dayak community had strong representation in both the Sarawak state assembly and in Parliament, Borneo Post reported.

He also said the Dayaks had posts in the federal and state Cabinets, with one of them – Douglas Uggah Embas – also serving as a deputy premier of Sarawak.

"What they need is unity and a consolidated front to address their challenges.

“The Dayaks’ lack of progress is largely due to the mediocrity of their own lawmakers in introducing workable solutions to key issues.

“The issue is not marginalisation but underperformance,” he was quoted as saying.

Economist Madeline Berma, a senior fellow at Institut Masa Depan Malaysia, cast doubt on whether such a unit could tackle the root causes of Dayak underemployment.

Berma said it would only add another layer of bureaucracy.

She said the government should focus instead on bolstering governance to ensure the relevant ministries can effectively deliver on existing programmes and initiatives.

“Rather than creating more institutions, the priority should be improving governance – that is, ensuring accountability, transparency and efficiency in resource management and decision-making,” she said.

Debating the 2026 budget in the Dewan Rakyat, Edwin had proposed that an agency like Mitra be set up to coordinate socio-economic programmes for the Dayak community.