



UPM hosts Act 134 dialogue, calls for inclusive reforms for Orang Asli

By: Aimi Mohamad Farid
Photo by: Saleha Haron



SERDANG, 23 April – A proposed overhaul of Malaysia’s decades-old Orang Asli law must go beyond legal amendments and reflect the lived realities of indigenous communities, stakeholders said at a dialogue hosted by Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).

Organised by UPM’s Faculty of Human Ecology in collaboration with Akademi Profesor Malaysia (APM), the session on the proposed amendments to Act 134 brought together policymakers, Orang Asli leaders, academics and civil society to push for more inclusive and practical policy reforms.

Director of Planning and Research at the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA), Abdul Hanan Abdul Rahim, said the government is reviewing Act 134, noting that the legislation, more than 70 years old, no longer reflects current needs.

“The proposed amendments aim to strengthen legal protection and ensure a more secure and inclusive future for the Orang Asli community. Input from all stakeholders, including the Orang Asli themselves, is critical,” he said.



Echoing the need for broader considerations, Deputy President of Akademi Profesor Malaysia, Prof Emeritus Datuk Dr Mohamed Ridza Wahiddin, stressed that reforms must extend beyond legal frameworks.

“Discussions on Act 134 should incorporate social, cultural and humanitarian perspectives to ensure holistic policymaking,” he said.

Meanwhile, UPM Faculty of Human Ecology Deputy Dean (Research and Innovation), Prof Dr Hanina Halimatusaadia Hamsan, said the university remains committed to facilitating discourse that addresses real-world challenges.

“Dialogues like this create space for meaningful engagement and the development of practical, community-focused solutions,” she said, adding that the faculty continues to prioritise research on societal issues.



The session, moderated by Prof Dr Sarjit Singh Gill, featured a panel of key voices including Orang Asli representatives, policymakers and advocates, reflecting a multi-stakeholder approach to reform.

Among them were Peninsular Malaysia Orang Asli Association (POASM) president Datuk Ajis Sitin, former Dewan Negara senator Datuk Isa Ab Hamid, Orang Asli activist and lawyer Amani Williams-Hunt, Orang Asli Women’s Organisation representative Ita Bah Nan and Indigenous Peoples Development Research Centre (KPKM) representative Zamri Berahim.

The dialogue aimed to generate policy recommendations while strengthening mutual understanding among stakeholders, with participants underscoring that inclusive governance is key to sustainable development for the Orang Asli community.

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