

'Bateq not being relocated'

Waytha and Jakoa deny community moving after outbreak

By RASHVINJEET S. BEDI
rashvin@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: Minister in the Prime Minister's Department P. Waytha Moorthy and the Orang Asli Development Department (Jakoa) have denied that the Bateq in Kampung Kuala Koh will be moved to another location after the tribe was hit by a fatal measles outbreak.

Jakoa said moving them to a new location was not the best solution to solve the problems faced by the community.

"Proper planning that transcends agencies has to be formulated to achieve development that is holistic, integrated and sustainable," it said in a statement yesterday.

The department added that it was working on solutions to help the community, including setting up several economic projects and ensuring they got a constant supply of electricity.

Similarly, Waytha Moorthy, who oversees Jakoa, said the government respected the traditional lifestyle of the Bateq people.

"They are more comfortable living in their current natural environment and it is not reasonable for us to move them to another place," he said in a statement.

They were responding to a news report quoting Kelantan Deputy Menteri Besar Datuk Mohd Amar Nik Abdullah as saying that Jakoa would move the villagers to another location.

The Bateq in the village in Kelantan have come under the spot-



Staying safe: Pupils of SK Sungai Berua – mainly from the Semaq Beri tribe – wearing face masks as a health precaution. – Bernama

light lately following the deaths of 15 of their people since May.

The common measles, combined with a fragile immune system and severe malnutrition, has been cited as a possible cause of death.

Peninsular Malaysia Orang Asli Villages Network (Jkoasm) chairman Tijah Yok Chopil said the issue at hand was that the Bateq there

were not provided with development that suited their needs.

"The problem is those providing them help are doing it from their own perspectives, and not from those receiving the help.

When it fails, the Orang Asli are blamed," she told reporters at a forum on the Orang Asli at the Faculty of Human Ecology at

Universiti Putra Malaysia yesterday.

She said there was no reason for the Bateq people to move from their ancestral land, where they have been living for years.

"If you say the environment is polluted, then just clean it up. If there is no water and electricity, make sure they are supplied with both," she said.

E-hailing drivers fight for rights after ban

KUALA LUMPUR: E-hailing driver associations will work together to fight for their rights after a rideshare company terminated or deactivated the accounts of a number of its drivers.

Penggerak Malaysia E-Hailing Drivers Community (KPePM) president Mohd Nazri Sahat said they will form a special team comprising driver associations with the assistance of MCA's Civil Society Coordination Bureau.

"The aim is to represent drivers in airing their grievances whether with the e-hailing companies or with the government," Nazri said after a dialogue session with e-hailing drivers here.

KPePM chairman Zulkefli Zainuddin said about 250 drivers nationwide have had their services terminated by a rideshare company.

MCA Civil Society Coordination Bureau chief Ng Kian Nam meanwhile said the bureau would help in issuing an appeal to e-hailing companies which terminated the services of the drivers.

"We received many complaints that they have been unfairly banned.

"We found many legal issues where drivers do not get proper protection as they are being banned without being given a platform to be heard and to appeal.

"The bureau will also invite the Transport Minister to attend a dialogue with the affected drivers to listen to their problems," Ng said.