



**JARINGAN TANAH HAK ADAT BANGSA ASAL SARAWAK  
(SARAWAK NATIVES CUSTOMARY RIGHTS LAND NETWORK)**

Lot 1046, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Shang Garden Shophouse  
Jalan Bulan Sabit, 98000 Miri  
Sarawak, Malaysia  
Tel: 085 423044 Fax: 085 438580

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**PRESS STATEMENT**

**TAHABAS have evidence that the State Government took away NCR of natives**

The Sarawak Native Customary Rights Land Network (TAHABAS) have lots of evidence to prove that the Sarawak State Government takes away the native customary rights (NCR) land of the natives without their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

Newly elected TAHABAS President, Romuald Siew strongly condemned the statements made by various state government representatives in the local press lately regarding issues related to NCR.

Siew was referring to a statement made by the Sarawak's Assistant Minister of Resource, Planning and Management, Mohd. Naroden Majais who was quoted saying that the State Government would not return NCR lands to the natives because there were no NCR lands that were taken from the natives in the first place.

“Naroden's statement are purely lies with the aim to confused the people”, said Siew.

TAHABAS have strong evidence that thousands of hectares of NCR land have been taken from the natives across the state by the State Government in the past few years. All this while, NCR lands are appropriated from the natives without obtaining the natives' FPIC.

The evidences are that the State Government has issued Provisional Leases (PL) to private companies and government development agencies for the purpose of establishing plantation estates throughout Sarawak. These PLs are issued over thousands of hectares of land which overlaps over NCR lands.

“If it is true that the State Government has never taken any NCR lands, why currently there are more than 200 cases of land disputes involving NCR lands which have been filed in the Courts throughout Sarawak? This is not counting many more NCR land disputes which have yet to be filed in Court. The number of native communities that are mulling legal action to protect their rights have risen throughout the years.

“The law in Sarawak clearly states that PLs, licence to plant forests (LPFs) and logging licences are only legal on State Land and if there are NCR claims over the area, these leases or licences should be excluded from NCR claimed areas”, said Siew.

Siew added that he is very disappointed with the attitude shown by some government leaders that continue to be arrogant to the plight of the natives and make nonsensical statements.

He is also disappointed with the State Government's refusal to recognise the natives NCR claims and continue with their stand that all lands in Sarawak without document of title is State Land.

### **Baram Hydroelectric Dam Project**

TAHABAS also condemns the recent statement made by Telang Usan elected representative, Lihan Jok that says that the Baram Dam is a gift from God for the Orang Ulu in Baram.

TAHABAS Vice President, Philip Jau regrets that God's name was used just to get the peoples' support for the construction of the dam.

"How can the Baram Dam which is going to destroy nature's bounty, inundate huge areas of NCR lands and forests, destroy the properties of the Orang Ulu communities and forcing the Orang Ulu communities to move from their village in Baram be a gift from God?", asked Philip.

The construction of the dam which will deliberately destroy the natural environment and its resources and also bring untold suffering and calamity to people is not a gift from God.

Lihan's statement shows that the State Government does not care less for the natives living in Baram to lead a sustainable and peaceful life.

The government should know that the Orang Ulu communities in Ulu Baram are strongly opposed to the dam project because they simply do not want the NCR lands, property and heritage be inundated and destroyed", said Philip.

Philip advises Lihan to stop using God's name in order to get support for the Baram Dam project because the people are strongly against the project.

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TAHABAS is a network and a grassroots movement of indigenous peoples' in Sarawak. TAHABAS acts as a platform for the indigenous peoples to voice out their concerns regarding indigenous peoples' rights to land in Sarawak. The network was established in 2004.

Press Statement issued by:

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Ramuald Siew CS, President