

From Margins to Mainstream: Paving Pathways for Indigenous Representation in Parliament

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Abstract

Participation in the decision-making process and representation of indigenous peoples in Parliament are important elements of the right to self-determination. However, the recognition of participation and representation is still inadequate compared to the recognition given by international law. In the context of aboriginal peoples (Orang Asli) as indigenous people in Peninsular Malaysia, previous studies identified lacunae in Malaysia's legal framework and policy regarding participation in the decision-making process and representation of Orang Asli in Parliament. The lack of legal recognition for Orang Asli's participation and representation in Parliament may hinder achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to analyse the legal framework of the rights of Orang Asli to participate in decision-making and represent their voice in Parliament and explore how participation in the decision-making process and representation of Orang Asli in Parliament can be improved. This paper employs a qualitative approach by analysing parliamentary documents. The discussion will be divided into several parts. The discussion is divided into several parts. Firstly, the study provides background information on Orang Asli. Secondly, the study analyses the current legal framework pertaining to the right to self-determination of indigenous people in pursuance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and international law. As this study focuses on the experience of Orang Asli in Malaysia, this paper evaluates the representation of Orang Asli in the Malaysian Parliament as well as analyses issues and challenges voiced by the Orang Asli Senators in the House of Senate. Finally, the study presents suitable recommendations to improve Orang Asli's participation in the decision-making process and their representation in Parliament. It is crucial to guarantee that the rights of the Orang Asli align with the standards set by international law and ultimately assist the Malaysian state in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030.

Keywords: Human rights, indigenous peoples, international law, Orang Asli, UNDRIP, representation, parliament

Introduction

The representation of the indigenous peoples in Parliament is crucial for ensuring their voices are heard in legislative and policy-making institutions. It guarantees that the distinct requirements, viewpoints, and protections of Indigenous peoples are included and taken into account in the law-making process (Protsyk, 2010). Indigenous representatives have the ability to actively participate in the development of legislation that has a direct impact on their communities (Morris, 2021). This is a significant advancement in promoting inclusivity and empowering individuals to make decisions for themselves (Protsyk, 2010). The perspective of the indigenous peoples provides a distinct viewpoint, which can enhance the health of democracy and promote inclusiveness (Williams & Badry, 2024). The representation of indigenous people in parliament is of utmost significance since it allows them to express their concerns and advocate for their rights.

In the Malaysian context, aboriginal people, known as Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia,¹ lack power and influence in the political system and have limited say in the decisions made on their rights. A majority of Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia have faced marginalisation and vulnerability, leading to their disadvantaged status in comparison to the dominant population of the country. The Orang Asli encountered various challenges, including the lack of recognition of their land rights, poverty, food insecurity, and numerous other concerns. Having said that, previous studies have identified gaps in the Malaysian legal framework and policy regarding participation in the decision-making process and representation of the Orang Asli in Parliament. Moreover, the existing legal framework concerning the rights of the Orang Asli is based on British origins and is lacking in adequate provisions that properly address the present challenges. The absence of legislative recognition for the participation and representation of the Orang Asli in Parliament could impede the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030.

¹ For the purpose of this paper, the authors refer to aboriginal peoples as Orang Asli, which represents indigenous peoples in Peninsular Malaysia. According to article 160 (2) of the Federal Constitution, “aborigine” means an aborigine of the Malay Peninsula.

Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to analyse the legal framework of the rights of Orang Asli to participate in decision-making and represent their voice in Parliament and explore how participation in the decision-making process and representation of Orang Asli in Parliament can be improved. This paper employs a qualitative approach by analysing parliamentary documents. The discussion is divided into several parts. Firstly, the study provides background information on Orang Asli. Secondly, the study analyses the current legal framework pertaining to the right to self-determination of indigenous people in pursuance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and international law. As this study focuses on the experience of Orang Asli in Malaysia, this paper evaluates the representation of Orang Asli in the Malaysian Parliament as well as analyses issues and challenges voiced by the Orang Asli Senators in the House of Senate. Finally, the study presents suitable recommendations to improve Orang Asli's participation in the decision-making process and their representation in Parliament. It is crucial to enhance the safeguarding of the rights of the Orang Asli in accordance with international norms and ultimately uphold their rights through the highest legislative body representing the people.

Background Information of Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia

Generally, Orang Asli refers to 18 tribes of society and then divided into three main groups based on their respective ethnography, namely Negrito, Senoi and Proto Malay (Department of Orang Asli Development, 2011-2015; Williams-hunt, 1952; Carey, 1976). This classification is also further divided into subethnic groups based on their respective ethnic languages, as illustrated in Table 1. Each of these tribes is unique and different because they have different languages, traditions and religions.

Historically, the Orang Asli were the earliest people to inhabit the land of the peninsula. Skeat and Bladgen (1966) confirmed that the Orang Asli were the first people to arrive on the peninsula. The Orang Asli is believed to have existed on the land of the peninsula thousands of years ago (Jones, 1968; Means, 1985). Orang Asli are considered the original people of the country because they are the descendants of the first generation who inhabited the land of the peninsula. These people are more

likely to live in forested areas and at the foot of the hills, which makes it easier for them to carry out their economic activities and traditional way of life.

The Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia shows that each tribe has its own identity and uniqueness. Therefore, the Orang Asli have a right to the protections afforded by the law and by international law. Legal recognition should be comprehensive, and it should be recognised in both theory and practical aspects of law.

Table 1 Population of Orang Asli by Ethnic and sub-ethnic

Ethnic	Sub-ethnic	Total
Senoi	Semai	118,318
	Temiar	
	Jah Hut	
	Semok Beri	
	Mah Meri	
	Che Wong	
Melayu-Proto	Jakun	90,531
	Temuan	
	Semelai	
	Orang Kuala	
	Orang Seletar	
	Orang Kanaq	
Negrito	Jahai	6,546
	Bateq	
	Mendrik	
	Lanoh	
	Kensiu	
	Kintak	
Total		215,215

Source: JAKOA Official Portal (2023)

According to the information presented in Table 1, the Orang Asli make up approximately 0.6 per cent of the entire Malaysian population. Regardless of the numbers, it is important to ensure that everyone is included, in line with the principles of human rights and the attainment of sustainable development objectives. Therefore, it is imperative to prioritise the inclusion of the Orang Asli's perspective in the decision-making process and their representation in parliament. It is crucial to ensure that their voice is heard and that their rights to self-determination are ultimately recognised.

Indigenous people and the Right to Self-determination

International law instruments recognise the right to self-determination as a part of human rights for indigenous peoples. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was recognised by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2007. Regardless of the nature of UNDRIP as a soft law, Article 3 of the UNDRIP recognises the rights of indigenous peoples to exercise their right to self-determination. The aforementioned provisions are identical to those found in the international human rights covenants, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The primary distinction lies in the fact that the UNDRIP is specifically tailored to address the rights of Indigenous peoples. The provision of the right to self-determination for indigenous peoples encompasses the following aspects: political, economic development, social, and cultural aspects. According to Daes (1996), these aspects are closely linked with the recognition of rights pertaining to natural resources.

Nevertheless, Article 4 of the UNDRIP restricts the extent of the right to self-determination, which is solely concerned with the right to autonomy or self-governance. Article 4 grants indigenous people the freedom to exercise self-governance and autonomy in matters pertaining to their internal and local affairs, including the ability to determine the methods and resources for financing their autonomous duties. Nordin and Witbrodt (2012) believe that Article 4 restricts the right to self-determination and applies only within a domestic setting, in contrast to the right to self-determination of all individuals, which encompasses the right to secession. This contradicts the principle of equality and discriminates against Indigenous peoples despite the fact that, in numerous instances, Indigenous peoples do not aspire to secession as outlined in international law (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1993/29, para 61).

Several notable international law scholars endorse the recognition of the indigenous peoples' right to self-determination. Daes (2002) describes the right to self-determination of Indigenous people as the ability to live according to their customs and beliefs while being accepted by the majority of society. This includes the principles of freedom, integrity, and respect for indigenous people. Anaya (1993) further proposes

that the right to self-determination is grounded in the values of freedom and equality. These two fundamental concepts provide a compelling justification for advocating for independence from foreign colonies. One way to assess the implementation of these rights is by examining the extent to which indigenous people can exercise their own freedoms in deciding and determining their own ways of life (Daes, 2002).

Furthermore, Hannum (1993) defined the right to self-determination as encompassing not only political dimensions but also economic, cultural, and social dimensions. The definition aligns with McCorquodale's (1994) elucidation, which positions the right to self-determination as a significant right for the indigenous population collectively. The recognition of the right to self-determination is in accordance with international law, as confirmed in the Western Sahara Advisory Opinion [1975] 12 ICJ. This right has also been accepted as *jus cogen* in international law (E/CN.4/ Sub.2/1993/29, para 61) and considers the right to self-determination as dynamic and not static (Thornberry, 1993). It recognises that the initiatives undertaken by the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) and the Working Group of the Draft Declaration (WGDD) are recognised as agents of change (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1993/29, para 61).

In conclusion, it is undeniable that the right to self-determination is a well-established concept under international law, and its application in the context of indigenous peoples is firmly grounded. Therefore, the present study asserts that indigenous representation in parliament is a political dimension of the right to self-determination and is one method of implementing it in domestic setting.

Representation of Orang Asli in the Malaysian Parliament

The Parliament of Malaysia adopts a bicameral parliamentary democracy system consisting of two chambers: the House of Senate (*Dewan Negara*) and the House of Representatives (*Dewan Rakyat*) (Md Yusof & Faruqi, 2020). The proposed constitution was based on parliamentary democracy and included a bicameral legislature (Harding, 2012 & Tuanku Jaafar, 2013). This is in accordance with Article 44 of the Federal Constitution, which states that "The federal legislative power shall vest in the Parliament, which shall consist of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and two

Houses of Parliament known as the Senate (*Dewan Negara*) and the House of Representatives (*Dewan Rakyat*)."

Article 45 (1) of the Federal Constitution establishes the composition of the Senate, which consists of elected and appointed 70 members (Faruqi, 2019).² In contrast, Article 46 states that the House of Representatives comprises of 222 elected members. Furthermore, Article 45 (2) of the Federal Constitution outlined several specific requirements for individuals serving as Members of the Senate:

- i. have rendered distinguished public service or have achieved distinction in the professions, commerce, industry, agriculture, cultural activities or social service; or
- ii. representative of racial minorities or
- iii. capable of representing the interests of aborigines (Orang Asli).

The present study focuses on the Orang Asli Senator, who represents the Orang Asli community in the House of Senate, as stated in Article 45 (2) of the Federal Constitution. Besides that, the Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954 [Act 134] does not specify the detailed procedure by which Orang Asli are chosen to represent themselves in Parliament.

In addition, Article 45(2) of the Federal Constitution stipulates the Orang Asli's representation in the Parliament, where a Senator shall be appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (YDPA), especially among the Orang Asli themselves to represent the interests and welfare of their community. This provision arguably appeared to be a recognition for the Orang Asli to let their voices be heard in formulating laws and policies at the federal level through parliament. It is rooted in the Report of the

² Article 45 (1) of the Federal Constitution states that the Senate shall consist of elected and appointed members as follows:

- (a) two members for each State shall be elected in accordance with the Seventh Schedule; and
- (aa) two members for the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, one member for the Federal Territory of Labuan and one member for the Federal Territory of Putrajaya shall be appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and
- (b) forty members shall be appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission 1957, known as the Reid Commission Report 1957. This Report indicates that the Orang Asli should be selected to represent minority voices. The members of racial minorities were selected by the High Commissioner to represent the Ceylonese community, the Eurasian community and the Orang Asli. The Orang Asli representation is also described in the Reid Commission Report 1957 on the selection criteria for a Senator (Report of the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission 1957).

Having said that, the Orang Asli Senator should exercise his or her parliamentary roles, such as legislative function and oversight function, as a check and balance on the action of the government in matters relating to Orang Asli issues, budget approval and representational function. These functions can be exercised through various mechanisms in parliament such as:

1. Oral Questions and Answers;
2. Royal Address Debate;
3. Bill debate;
4. Budget Debate and
5. Parliamentary Select Committee.

These oversight functions can be exercised through posting questions according to Standing Order No. 20, House of Senate. The questions may be related to a bill, motion or other public matter connected with the business of the House for which such Senators are responsible (Standing Order No. 20, The House of Senate, Parliament of Malaysia).

Additionally, as a parliamentarian, the Orang Asli Senator can also propose a motion to the house relating to Orang Asli issues, debate on budgets and other avenues that bring the interest of the Orang Asli in Parliament (Standing Order No. 20, The House of Senate, Parliament of Malaysia). Therefore, the Orang Asli Senator should execute his functions effectively through law-making, budgeting, and oversight functions and ultimately put forward all Orang Asli concerns and interests to the attention of the government as deliberated in the next section.

Analyses Issues and Challenges Voiced by the Orang Asli Representatives in the House of Senate.

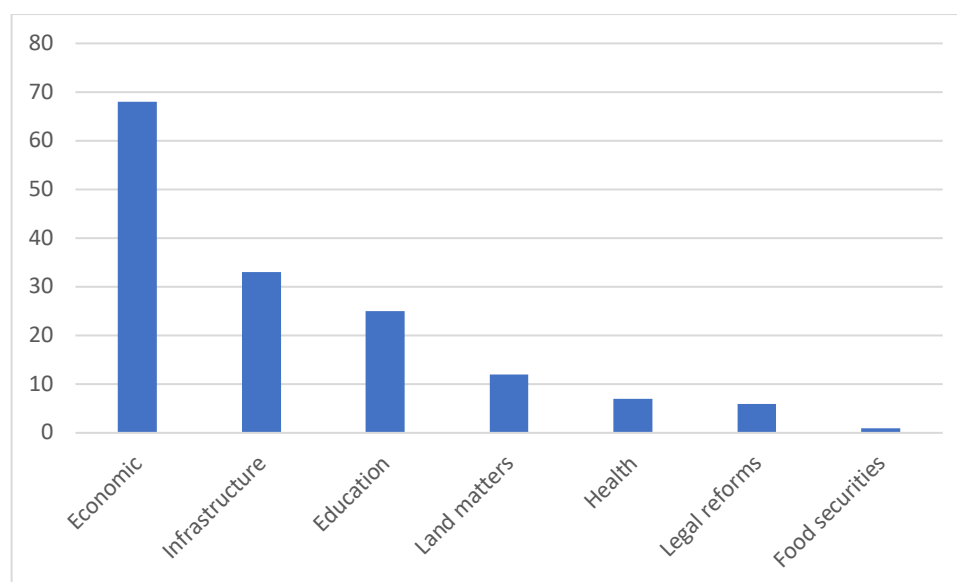
The present study examines the concerns brought up by the Orang Asli Senators in the House of Senate during the period from March 2023 to April 2024. However, this study gathers data from the parliamentary hansards of the Senate regarding several mechanisms of oversight and accountability in the Senate. These mechanisms encompass:

1. Oral Questions and Answers;
2. Royal Address Debate;
3. Bill debate; and
4. Budget Debate.

Table 2 Issues raised by Senator in the House of Senate

Economic	Infrastructure	Education	Land matters	Health	Legal reforms	Food securities
68	33	25	12	7	6	1

Sources: Hansards of the Senate from March 2023 to April 2024



Graph 1 Issues raised by Orang Asli Senator in the House of Senate

Sources: Hansards of the Senate from March 2023 to April 2024

Considering Table 2 and Graph 1 as a reference, the following discussion is an explanation of the problems that the Senator of Orang Asli have brought to the attention of the House of Senate. These challenges require the proactive involvement of the Executive to propose solutions.

1. Economic issue

Based on the information provided above, economic concerns hold the utmost significance for the Orang Asli community, constituting 68 instances. Undoubtedly, the Orang Asli face significant challenges related to poverty and have reached a point where they require government intervention for protection. The senators have expressed several economic concerns, including poverty, job prospects, government initiatives for the Orang Asli community, plantation, and other related matters.

The Orang Asli community continues to grapple with poverty challenges, making it imperative to address economic concerns. Based on the data provided in the 12th Malaysia Plan (12MP), the Orang Asli community continues to experience a significant disparity in socio-economic progress. In 2019, the incidence of poverty among the Orang Asli remained high, standing at 33.6%. The lack of a comprehensive and well-integrated socio-economic development strategy for the Orang Asli hinders their progress. Thus, the Orang Asli Senator appropriately raises economic concerns in parliament to ensure that the government takes action to address the challenges faced by the Orang Asli people.

2. Infrastructure issue

Furthermore, the matter of infrastructure in residential areas inhabited by the Orang Asli community is the second most significant concern frequently discussed in the Senate, accounting for 33 times. Some of the infrastructure concerns include internet connectivity, transportation routes, electrical power supply, access to clean water, and other related challenges (Economic Planning Unit, 2021). The significance of infrastructure matters cannot be disregarded since it is imperative to enhance the quality of life for the Orang Asli, particularly in rural areas. For instance, the Orang Asli community faces challenges in terms of the quality of education and infrastructure

(A/HRC/WG.6/17/Mys/3). Thus, the government needs to take the issue of infrastructure into consideration to make sure that the lives of Orang Asli are improved and that they will be able to live better.

3. Education Issue

Regarding education among the Orang Asli, a total of 25 issues have been raised in the Senate regarding the issue of Orang Asli education. This shows that the Orang Asli are facing a notable disparity in the provision of high-quality education. Orang Asli community face various challenges, including insufficient infrastructure, limited school accessibility, and social inequalities. It is of utmost importance to address these disparities, fight for systemic changes, and provide equitable and inclusive educational opportunities for children belonging to the Orang Asli community, particularly in the highest legislative institution like parliament.

In Malaysia, there are several provisions of the law that protect the right to education. According to Article 12(1) of the Federal Constitution, every individual has the right to education without discrimination based on religion, race, descent, or place of birth. In this context, as citizens of Malaysia, the Orang Asli have the right to enjoy protection under this provision. Apart from that, the Education Act 1996 is also one of the laws protecting the rights to education in Malaysia, including those of Orang Asli. In particular, section 29(A) of the Education Act is amended to ensure primary education is compulsory for all children under the age of six following Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Furthermore, Act 134 should explicitly address Section 17, which deals with the rights of education for the indigenous peoples. Section 17(1) of the APA provides that no Orang Asli child shall be precluded from attending any school by reason only of him being an Orang Asli.

Thus, it is imperative for the Orang Asli Senators to consistently advocate equal opportunities for high-quality education for the Orang Asli children in parliament, utilising all available means at their disposal.

4. Land Issues

Furthermore, the Orang Asli senators in the Senate have brought up concerns regarding the Orang Asli land problem 12 times. Similar to Indigenous populations in other nations, the Orang Asli in Malaysia likewise have a range of challenges regarding the recognition of their customary land rights. The matter of recognising Orang Asli land is not a recent issue. In fact, there are many court cases brought by the Orang Asli relating to the land dispute, such as *Adong Bin Kuwau & Ors v. Kerajaan Negeri Johor & Anor*, *Mlj 418 [1997]*, *Sagong bin Tasi v. Kerajaan Negeri Selangor* [2002] 2 MLJ, *Mohamad bin Nohing (Batin Kampung Bukit Rok) & Ors v. Pejabat Tanah dan Galian Negeri Pahang & Ors* [2013] MLJU, *Pengarah Tanah dan Galian Johor dan satu lagi v. Khalip bin Bachik dan satu lagi* [2012] MLJU, and many others.

At the same time, certain initiatives have been taken by the government to recognise the customary land rights of the Orang Asli. In 2019, the government proactively organised the National Indigenous Convention 2019, a meeting with the Orang Asli community to address many issues, including the matter of customary land (Prime Minister's Office, 2019). In 2018, the government released a National Human Rights Action Plan outlining the necessary measures to recognise and uphold the customary land rights of the Orang Asli. Meanwhile, the Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM) has released findings and recommendations regarding the issue of Orang Asli land rights in Malaysia, which were presented in the Orang Asli Report of the National Inquiry into the Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples In Malaysia in 2013. Nevertheless, these recommendations have yet to be fully implemented.

5. Legal reforms

Furthermore, one of the issues highlighted by the Orang Asli Senator was the need for a comprehensive overhaul of the legislation, which has been revised in six instances. Legal reform is crucial due to the lack of amendments made to the Orang Asli Act 1954 [Act 134] over an extended period of time. The Act consists of only 19 sections and includes provisions to provide for the protection, well-being and advancement of the Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia.

Furthermore, this revision holds significant importance as it is derived from the structure established by the previous colonisers. Within this particular setting, the government is implementing measures to enhance the comprehensiveness of Act 134 through revision. The Act should be updated to align with contemporary advancements, the progression of recognising the rights of Indigenous peoples in conformity with international law, and the growing recognition of Indigenous peoples's rights globally.

Based on the above analysis, the study affirms that the Orang Asli are vulnerable because of their economic and social conditions, which necessitate further protection of their fundamental rights. Hence, parliament serves as the supreme platform where their concerns can be voiced, addressed, and resolved, thereby ensuring their protection. The mechanisms of checks and balances in parliaments are essential for ensuring that their concerns are effectively communicated to the government.

Indigenous Representation in Parliament: The Way Forward

In spite of the fact that international law recognises the rights of indigenous peoples, there are alternative methods that can be implemented to improve the protection of the rights of Orang Asli in parliament. These methods involve leveraging the functions and capacity of Orang Asli Senators as parliamentarians who represent the voice of Orang Asli.

1. The establishment of a Special select committee focuses on the issue of Orang Asli.

In the current setting of the Special Select Committee (SSC) under the House of Senate, Orang Asli issues may be relevant and deliberated under the Special Select Committee on Social and Community Affairs. The study believes that it would be more effective if a dedicated SSC were introduced to focus on a specific target group, namely Orang Asli.

In other parliaments, various select committees have been established to address matters concerning the Indigenous peoples. For instance, the House of Senate Canada has set up a dedicated Standing Committee on Indigenous Peoples in accordance with Rules 12-7 (15) of the Rules of Senate. The committee has been mandated to conduct studies and scrutinise bills pertaining to the federal government's constitutional, treaty, political, and legal obligations towards First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples (Senate of Canada, 2024). Similarly, the New Zealand Parliament formed a Select Committee specifically on Maori Affairs pursuant to Rule 185 (1) of the Standing Orders. Select Committee of Maori Affairs is one of the subject select committees specifically provided under Rule 189 of the Standing Orders of the Parliament. The primary role of the committee is to handle matters pertaining to Māori affairs and negotiations concerning the Treaty of Waitangi (New Zealand Parliament, 2024).

However, Parliament Australia has a Joint Select Committee On Constitutional Recognition Relating To Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander Peoples 2018, which consists of both representatives from the House of Representatives and the House of Senate. These committees were set up to work on specific terms of reference, which revolve around the issue of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Parliament of Australia, 2024).

Therefore, the SSC focuses on the issue of Orang Asli may offer a critical platform to ensure that the SSC in the Senate fulfils its mandate of overseeing policy execution as well as ensuring the government is accountable to the Orang Asli development and well-being. Both parliament and Orang Asli Senators should carry out their responsibilities in SSC to ensure that all government plans, strategies and policies are successfully implemented.

2. Advocates the issue of Orang Asli in international platforms

The Orang Asli Senator could make use of international platforms such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) or The ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) as an opportunity to advocate or commence the debate on the indigenous matter. Through this

platform, MPs will be able to share their experiences and the procedures that they have implemented in order to advance and safeguard the rights of indigenous peoples in their respective nations. In addition to that, the Orang Asli Senator may be the one to sponsor the resolution that will incorporate a discussion on the specific challenges, particularly those issues that are commonly faced by Indigenous peoples all over the world, such as economic issues, the recognition of land rights, and education.

3. Supporting Orang Asli budgetary debate.

The senator representing the Orang Asli community should swiftly advocate and lobby the government for a budget that places a priority on the development and well-being of the Orang Asli community. It is the responsibility of the senator representing the Orang Asli people to advocate for the approval of the government's budget, particularly related to issues of economy, infrastructure, land rights, and education.

4. Cultivate a connection between the Orang Asli community and parliament.

The Orang Asli Senators should actively contribute to fostering a connection between parliament and the Orang Asli community, as parliament serves as the institution that represents the people. This close connection is crucial to ensure that all matters raised in parliament are also appreciated by the Orang Asli, who lack the privilege of being physically present in the parliament building. Moreover, the Senators should foster a positive rapport between the parliament and the Orang Asli community to effectively promote the active engagement of the Orang Asli in political participation and decision-making processes.

To enhance the relationship between parliament and the Orang Asli, the senators need to play their representational function to serve as representatives of the people. In their capacity as members of parliament, Orang Asli senators should consistently interact with the Orang Asli community to ascertain the real challenges they are encountering. Furthermore, it is imperative for the Orang Asli

Senators to actively engage with students and youth in order to foster proactive discussions on their issues, rights, and protection of the Orang Asli community.

Conclusion

In conclusion, indigenous representation in Parliament is essential to safeguard the rights and interests of indigenous peoples, provide them with a say in issues that impact them, and ensure that the government policy is inclusive. As such, the current legal framework for the representation of the Orang Asli requires additional enhancements to align with the different articles of the UNDRIP. This would further ensure the protection of the rights of the Orang Asli, and their right to self-determination is recognised in accordance with international law.

Hence, it is imperative for the law relating to Orang Asli, particularly the Orang Asli Act 1954 [Act 134], to undergo revision and reforms. The government should take proactive measures to recognise the rights of Orang Asli to participate in the decision-making process at all levels, including representation in parliament, in line with the principles of self-determination as outlined in Article 3 of UNDRIP. It is crucial to guarantee that safeguarding the rights of the Orang Asli aligns with the standards set by international law and ultimately assists the Malaysian state in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030.

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