



Time to put non-Bumiputera rights on firm footing, say academics

PETALING JAYA: Academics say there is a need to include ethnic minorities in public and social spheres in Malaysia, given the dwindling non-Bumiputera population size.

Lee Hwok Aun of the Singapore-based ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute said with the shrinking number of Chinese and Indians in Malaysia, their voices and rights as minorities needed to be institutionalised.

Lee Hwok Aun.

“Public institutions, the education system and society must purposefully ensure that minority identities and contributions are acknowledged, celebrated, and fair opportunities be given to them,” he told FMT.

“This is important to ensure social cohesion and democratic integrity,” he added.

The **statistics department** recently revealed that Malaysia’s Chinese and Indian populations shrank by 1.3% and 0.6% respectively in the last decade, according to the 2020 census.

Tey Nai Peng.

Meanwhile, the Bumiputera population has grown by 2%, from 67.4% to 69.4% between 2010 to 2020, which leaves the non-Bumiputera population at about 30% only.

Demographer Tey Nai Peng of Universiti Malaya predicted that the non-Bumiputera share of the population would be reduced to about 25% by 2050.

“This is due to the widening gap between the Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera groups, caused by a lower birth rate among the Chinese and Indians and a higher rate of emigration.

“The number of births for Chinese and Indians decreased from 74,068 and 27,556 in 2010 to 51,241 and 20,379 respectively in 2020. By contrast, Bumiputera births increased from 358,744 to 374,032 during the same period,” he said.

Diversity among Bumiputeras

Sociologist Denison Jayasooria of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia said that while the census data showed a large Bumiputera dominance, it may not truly reflect the diversity that existed within the country, or even within the Bumiputera group.

Denison Jayasooria.

He said that there was a need to take a closer look at the Bumiputera group to accurately show its heterogeneity.

“There needs to be a further breakdown of the Bumiputera category, as it’s too large and discounts the differences within the group itself, such as between peninsular Bumiputeras and those in Sabah and Sarawak,” he told FMT.

He added that even among Malays there were sub-groups, such as Javanese, Bugis, and Banjar.

“They all may differ in many ways, from voting patterns, political mindset, sense of identity, to access to resources and opportunities,” he said.

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