



24 JUL, 2026

Rep proposes stronger strategic role for MHEANS

Borneo Post (KK), Malaysia



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KOTA KINABALU: Moyog assemblyman Datuk Donald P. Mojuntin has proposed transforming the Sabah Native Affairs Council (MHEANS) into the state government's strategic think tank on Native affairs and formulating a Sabah Native Affairs Transformation Blueprint 2035 under the Majlis Hal Ehwal Anak Negeri Sabah (Amendment) Enactment 2026.

Speaking during the debate on the Bill at the State Legislative Assembly on Thursday, Donald said the reforms would elevate MHEANS into a more dynamic, research-driven institution capable of leading policy development and institutional reforms concerning Sabah's Native communities.

He welcomed the proposed amendment to Section 4 of the Enactment, which expands the council's functions to include customary education and customary law, but said its role should go beyond that of an advisory body.

"MHEANS should not merely provide advice when requested. Instead, it should continuously conduct research, formulate policy recommendations and spearhead institutional reforms," he said.

Donald proposed that the council be entrusted with developing long-term policies for the Native community, conducting

research on customary laws and traditions, reviewing legislation affecting Native communities, leading reforms of the Native Court system and publishing an annual Sabah Native Affairs Report as a reference for the government and the State Legislative Assembly.

He said the Sabah Native Affairs Department (JHEANS) should continue serving as the implementing agency responsible for administration, operations and service delivery, while MHEANS focuses on strategic planning and policy formulation.

"In short, MHEANS should formulate policies and provide strategic advice, while JHEANS professionally implements those policies. Such a division of responsibilities would make both institutions more efficient, independent and effective," he said.

Donald also proposed broadening the composition of MHEANS beyond the provisions in Clause 5 of the Bill to better reflect Sabah's diverse expertise and Native communities.

He suggested including representatives from the state's various Native ethnic groups, experts in customary law, representatives from the Native Courts, academics from Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and other higher learning

institutions, Native women and youth representatives, as well as experts in digitalisation, heritage preservation, public policy and governance.

"This combination of expertise would make MHEANS more dynamic, credible and capable of producing research and policies that genuinely address the needs of the Native community," he said.

To complement the proposed reforms, Donald called for the preparation of a Sabah Native Affairs Transformation Blueprint 2035, a long-term master plan to comprehensively transform MHEANS, the Native Courts and JHEANS in line with the Sabah Maju Jaya agenda and the 13th Malaysia Plan (13MP).

He said Sabah's Native institutions represent a unique heritage that should not only be preserved but continuously strengthened.

"I am confident that by empowering MHEANS as a strategic think tank and broadening its membership based on expertise and inclusiveness, we can build an institution that truly becomes the driving force for policy, research and institutional reform in Native affairs in Sabah," he said.



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SUMMARIES

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