

 Mon, Nov 2 2009 - KUCHING: The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) wants an urgent review of the Sarawak state laws to guarantee all indigenous communities their right to customary land.

Suhakam commissioner Dr Mohammad Hirman Ritom Abdullah said the rights of the indigenous people to their customary land, which embraced cultural sites and traditional burial places, should be upheld.

A right to land would create economic opportunities and provide means to sustain a basic livelihood. Such factors are vital considerations in minimising social displacement, he said at a dinner here last Saturday.

Dr Ritom said the Penan community's right to establishing native customary rights to land they had resettled had not been resolved.

The Sarawak Land Code 1958 does not have provisions for the Penans to establish ownership of land on which they have traditionally lived for generations.

Dr Ritom said more than half of the complaints Suhakam Sarawak received were related to land matters. Last year, the commission recorded 78 complaints.