Six Decades of Exploitation

> *How Sabah's wealth has been extracted while its people remain poor*

Resource Wealth, Sabahan Poverty

Sabah is one of the most resource-rich territories in Southeast Asia. It possesses enormous reserves of oil and natural gas, vast tropical forests, fertile agricultural land, and extraordinary marine biodiversity. Yet Sabah consistently ranks among the poorest states in Malaysia, with some of the highest rates of poverty, infant mortality, and lack of access to clean water and basic services in the country.

The 5% Oil Royalty

Under arrangements with Petronas, Malaysia's national oil company, Sabah receives only 5% in oil royalties — the same rate as a federal rebate, not a resource royalty. This arrangement has denied Sabah hundreds of billions of ringgit in revenue that should rightfully belong to its people. Movements demanding a higher royalty — or full control over the territory's resources — have been consistently suppressed.

Timber, Palm Oil, and Environmental Destruction

Sabah's forests — among the most biodiverse in the world — have been extensively logged, with concessions awarded to politically-connected companies with little benefit to local communities. The expansion of oil palm plantations has displaced indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands, destroyed wildlife habitat, and polluted waterways. The proceeds have flowed overwhelmingly out of Sabah.

The Sabah People's Right to Their Resources

Under international law — specifically the principle of permanent sovereignty over natural resources — the people of a territory have the right to control and benefit from

that territory's natural wealth. This principle supports not only Sabah's right to independence, but also its right to retrospective compensation for decades of resource extraction without consent.

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