

## **Jeffrey hails Putrajaya meeting over 'secession'**

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Sabah's maverick politician, Jeffrey Kitingan, has welcomed Deputy Home Minister Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar's suggestion to meet him together with other 'separatists' advocating independence for Sabah and Sarawak from Malaysia.

Jeffrey's name has been singled out by Wan Junaidi, himself a Sarawakian.

He said: "The best and the only way to deal with the incessant urgings for secession or separation is to take the bull by the horns and address them.

"It is time for the federal government to address the unhappiness behind the calls for secession, or separation or for Sabah/Sarawak rights... the urgings become louder and more intense, the longer these frustrations are ignored over time," added Jeffrey, who was detained under the ISA in the 1990s for raising the rights of Sabah under the 20-point pre-conditions for the formation of Malaysia.

At that time, he was questioning why the federal government was treating the PBS democratically elected government so badly. For that he earned himself the "secessionist" label.

"Today, these calls for 'separation' are gaining momentum inside and outside Malaysia because the government has ignored the cries for justice for the last 50 years," Jeffrey said when commenting on a statement made by the deputy home minister.

Last week, Wan Junaidi (right) wanted to try and meet with the "separatists" advocating independence of the two states from Malaysia, instead of arresting them for their activities.

"As long as they don't break the law, we are not going to arrest them," Wan Junaidi had said in the statement warning the activists against overstepping the boundaries in exercising their freedom of speech.

Talking softly, wielding big stick

"The government is even willing to bend over backwards to give them time and space to come around.

"We know who they are and even their names. We are monitoring and watching them. We are monitoring to see how serious the whole thing develops," Wan Junaidi had said, pointing out that the situation in Sabah was under control as it merely involved 'disgruntled politicians' who had been using the social media as their platform to express their views and influence others.

Among disgruntled Sabah politicians advocating the independence of the two Borneo nations, he stressed, was United Borneo Front (UBF) president Jeffrey Kitingan.

Nevertheless, as the deputy home minister, the Santubong MP said he understands the sentiments and rationale of these "separatists" and would try "to see not just the negative side of it but also the positive side".

Reacting to Wan Junaidi's statement, Jeffrey, (left) who is Star Sabah chief said the situation has gotten worse due to actions and decisions taken by Kuala Lumpur over the Borneo State show.

He said that they have tended to reinforce concerns that Kuala Lumpur's intention all along was to take over the two states, re-colonise and subjugate them and exploit their oil resources.... through actions like pressuring the states to surrender their oil, imposing the rotation of chief ministers, changing the demography of Sabah through the so-called 'Project IC/Mahathir'; the downgrading of their status to become the 12th and 13th Malayan states; the jailing of activists, and the direct rule from Kuala Lumpur through Umno

"Discussing and querying the federal and Sabah governments on this unhappiness have not only met with negative responses but their loyalty to Malaysia is being questioned, and those expressing unhappiness are simply called 'secessionists or separatists" lamented Jeffrey.

He said: "So, it is time for the powers that be to come down from their high horses and listen. Yes, listen and address these frustrations before it is too late."

He added that the prime minister must be serious about this, diffuse the situation and the rhetoric, and speedily establish a national mechanism to address these unhappiness.

"Please don't continue to ignore and sweep these problems under the carpet. The calls for the review of the Malaysia Agreement should be respected and accepted in good faith," he said, advising them not to say "apa mau review review..." as was the response he received when he raised the matter recently in the Sabah legislative assembly.