

**DAP: Set up 'Sarawak Affairs Ministry'**  
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Sarawak DAP wants the federal government to revive the Sarawak Affairs Ministry, which was abolished in early 1970s, to look after needs and issues affecting the state and its people.

“The minister shall have the final decision on all federal matters in relation to or affecting Sarawak,” Sarawak DAP said in its Bintulu Declaration, which was made at its annual general meeting in Bintulu yesterday.

Jugah anak Barieng was the first Sarawakian to be appointed Sarawak Affairs Minister soon after the formation of Malaysia in 1963. A similar post was also created for Sabah.

The post was abolished after the 1970 general election, and no reason was given as to why it was abolished.

Since the post was abolished, a lot of changes have taken place, DAP said, such as reducing Sarawak to one of the 13 states in Malaysia and the state has now become a colony of the powers that be in Putrajaya.

Sarawak DAP said in a statement that it has adopted the Bintulu Declaration, which aims to restore the status of Sarawak as an equal partner in the Federation of Malaya in Malaysia.

It aims to create an environment where the people of Sarawak will be equal partners with one another by a fairer and more equitable management and distribution of the state’s wealth among all Sarawakians.

Sarawak is 20 years behind Malaysia'

“Given that the level of development, Sarawak is 20 years behind West Malaysia. DAP recognises that more affirmative measures are required to give true meaning to the equal partner status,” the Bintulu Declaration says.

It also wants the present judiciary system to be changed, with the Chief Judge of Sabah and Sarawak being at par with the Chief Judge of Malaya, with his/her own autonomous power in budgetary and administrative matters in relation to the judiciary in Sabah and Sarawak.

Other key points in the declaration are:

The Federal Government should respect the true spirit of the formation of Malaysia; that Malaysia is a secular state where freedom of religion shall be upheld at all times;

The Sarawak government should be empowered with sufficient revenue for the planning

and development of the state to be at par with West Malaysia by (a) returning to Sarawak 20 percent of the oil and gas royalty and (b) returning to Sarawak 50 percent of all tax revenue collected in Sarawak; and

To review the Ninth Schedule of the Federal Constitution to develop education and healthcare in Sarawak and to allow Sarawak to have some autonomy over its own police force.

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