

No sympathy for DAP rep's claim to be a native
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DAP's Sri Tanjung assemblyperson Jimmy Wong is getting no sympathy from native associations in pushing for his claim that he is a Sino-Kadazan and therefore a native.

A special state government board has since recommended that the Native Court takes away Wong's native certificate.

However, Sabah DAP secretary Edwin Bosi, a Dusun, is standing by Wong on his claim that he is a native by virtue of him being a Sino-Kadazan.

Meanwhile, the director of Native Affairs has returned Wong's native certificate - found to be genuine - to him.

Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) vice-president Herbert Timbon Lagadan, coming to the defence of his president Joseph Pairin Kitingan, warned Wong not to drag the huguan siou into his legal problems with his native certificate.

Joseph Pairin Kitingan (left), as huguan siou or paramount chief of the KadazanDusunMurut, has been quoted in the local media as saying that "the KDCA is purely a cultural organisation and cannot intervene" in Wong's tangle over his Sino-Kadazan status.

"The main issue is whether the supporting documents Wong provided to the native court are genuine or fake," Lagadan said in a statement. "It must be remembered that even illegal immigrants have been discovered providing false documents to obtain the MyKad."

Lagadan was responding to allegations in the local media by Wong and fellow party leaders that Pairin had failed to protect Sino-Kadazans like him "at a moment when I most needed it".

He had also called on the KDCA or KadazanDusunMurut Cultural Association, headed by Pairin, to declare its stand on the native status of Sino-Kadazans.

Wong has to 'prove authenticity' of his documents

"Neither Pairin nor the KDCA had ever disowned a true Sino-Kadazan as a native," said Lagadan. "This means that we will not endorse any Tom, Dick and Harry who tries to pass off questionable documentation as genuine to obtain native status."

In the case of Wong, he said "the Native Court that granted Wong the native certificate is the best avenue for him to revisit on the authenticity of the documents provided in support of his native status claim".

Nobody, he reiterated, was questioning the originality or authenticity of the Wong's native certificate. They were questioning, as the special state government board did, the authenticity of the supporting documents Wong used to obtain the certificate.

He also said he could not understand why Bosi "is so worried about Wong losing his native

status". He suspects the DAP of trying to politicise the matter to score points at the expense of Pairin, PBS and the KDCA.

Meanwhile, Sabah state assembly deputy speaker and PBS information chief Johnny Mositun clarified that Wong's case was far from settled. The Native Court, he said, was yet to annul the state assemblyperson's native certificate.

"The issue between Wong and the Native Affairs Office is whether he's a Sino-Kadazan and if not, the grounds on which the native certificate was issued to him by the Native Court," said Mositun. "The issue is not whether the native certificate he's holding is authentic or otherwise."

'No necessity for Wong to rush to court'

Lawyers in the know in Kota Kinabalu say that it's not necessary for Wong to rush to the Native Court, "since the Native Affairs Office made the mistake of returning his native certificate to him".

According to them, Wong should just wait for the Native Court to summon him. They are not sure this will happen, unless the director of Native Affairs takes the matter to the Native Court and asks for a ruling on it.

"At the end of the day, as the State Local Government and Housing Minister Hajiji Noor had advised, Wong should examine his conscience and ask himself whether he was really a native," said a senior Kadazan lawyer. "Wong should be prepared to proceed on that basis."

Wong had told the state assembly that his elder brother had applied for his native certificate before April 22, 1982, while he (Wong) was studying in London.

Following the discovery of widespread abuses, the state government advised the Native Court not to issue any more native certificates after that date.

The state government would screen genuine applicants before they get a verification letter on their status from the Native Court. It is not clear how this tallies with the state's interpretation of the Native Ordinance