

Kadazan cousins clash over native leadership
Malaysiakini.com
Aug 17, 2009
Joe Fernandez

Kota Kinabalu's Penampang district, long the troublesome heartland of Kadazan (urban Dusun) nationalism in Sabah, is witnessing an epic struggle for the coveted District Native Chief's (DNC) post.

The do-or-die affair, evidently the tip of the proverbial iceberg, is between two senior citizens past 60 who are 2nd cousins from the Wong Sim Ting clan in Penampang.

The incumbent, OKK (Orang Kaya Kaya) Christopher Mojungkim, 66, claims that he has been appointed DNC for life.

There's no provision in the Native Affairs Constitution that he has to retire at 65 years of age, says Mojungkim.

He has the backing of 27 village chiefs, Ketua Anak Negeri (KaN or Native Chief) and Wakil Ketua Anak Negeri (WKaN or Representatives of KAN) who all feel it might be their turn to bite the dust next.

Several of them (some of whom are qualified to be DCN) met in Penampang over the weekend in an open show of support for Mojungkim.

Sylvester Disimon, 62, the Deputy President of the Kadazan Society Sabah KSS), meanwhile, claims that he has in fact already been appointed the DNC for Penampang from Aug 3, effectively succeeding Mojungkim.

The incumbent has apparently been deemed "too old to continue with the job" as he's on the wrong side of the 60.

It is not known who made the decision.

"I have already signed the acceptance offer and handed it to the Penampang District Officer William Sampil on Aug 10," said Disimon who admitted that he has no security of tenure.

"My appointment letter clearly states that my services can be terminated at any time at one month's notice."

"Mojungkim's services as DNC were terminated on July 23 and he has admitted receiving the letter on Aug 12 through the Penampang District Office. Therefore, his last day of service would be on Saturday Aug 22."

Mohd Said Hinayat, the Director of the Native Affairs Council who reportedly signed Mojungkim's termination letter, was not immediately available for comment.

It is learnt that a clerk in the District Office, and not from the Native Affairs Council, handed Mojungkim his letter of termination.

Claims and counter claims

Disimon, citing from his "letter of appointment", stressed that it's evident that a DCN "so

appointed" is subject to the Sabah General Orders and other government regulations issued from time-to-time . . . meaning that "Mojungkim should do the disappearing act".

"Not so soon" is the stand taken by Mojungkim and his supporters, pouring cold water on Disimon's plans to assume his post, now delayed to Sept 1 and not Aug 23.

Mystery also surrounds the reason why Mojungkim was replaced and why Disimon was chosen and the manner of the "termination" and "appointment" respectively.

Mojungkim held the DCN's post for only 17 months.

Previously, he was a Village Chief in Tuavon for 21 years and Native Chief for eight years.

He is a nephew of the late OKK Jintol Mogunting, a former Penampang DNC.

Disimon (*right*) claims that he "applied for the post" on the recommendation of the state assemblyperson for Moyog, Donald Mojuntin, and with the blessing of Penampang MP Bernard Giluk Dompok and had his bid verified by Sampil.

It is not known what made him "apply for the post" and whether the "vacancy was advertised in the local media or applications forms distributed to prospective candidates" and if "interviews were conducted".

Mojungkim reportedly was not informed about his termination until Disimon's appointment had been announced in the local media much to the former's surprise.

His supporters are now crying foul and demanding that the state government conduct "a proper investigation of the entire sordid affair".

Michael Kubot, the chairman of the Penampang Community Leaders Welfare Association (PCLWA) said his members were saddened by the way Mojungkim was terminated.

"The question is whether the job termination was necessary or unnecessary," said Kubot.

"It is really unfair to the person if he was sacked from the job without any prior notice or any disciplinary action taken if indeed he has done something wrong."

"We do not agree with Disimon's appointment as DNC. It could be that the authorities don't know about his background."

Kubot didn't not specify what he meant by his reference to Disimon's "background".

'State Umno not behind sacking'

According to records, Disimon's grandfather, Mogunting bin Batinjam, was a Native Chief in the 1930s.

Borneo Heritage Foundation chairman Jeffrey Gapari Kitingan called on the state government to squash widespread speculation that Sabah Umno is behind Mojungkim's termination.

"The talk is that Marcel Leiking, the KSS President and an Umno member, pushed for Disimon's appointment," said Kitingan, also a Vice-President of PKR (Parti Keadilan Rakyat)

and Deputy President of the KadazanDusunMurut Cultural Association (KDCA).

Umno's purported involvement in native affairs, hinted by Kitingan, "does not augur well for the 1Malaysia concept promoted by Prime Minister Mohd Najib Abdul Razak".

Kitingan called for "proper consultations, which is basic common courtesy and decency, before any terminations or appointments are made to native posts".

He wonders why Mojungkim has been given the 'kurang ajar '(ill-mannered) treatment by the state government and reiterated that "the Chief Minister should reveal all and assure that party politics does not interfere with the governance of native affairs in Sabah".

Kitingan's (*left*) reference to Umno has not gone down well with Disimon's supporters who stress that "a Kadazan or Dusun is not any less Kadazan or Dusun just because they are in Umno.

Chief Minister Musa Aman and Foreign Minister Anifah Aman, who are Dusun-Pathan brothers from the west coast, Penampang Umno Chief John Ambrose and State Environment, Tourism and Culture Minister Masidi Manjun, a Dusun Muslim from Ranau, are all examples of "leaders who have remained true to the Native cause despite their membership in Umno, a Peninsular Malaysia-based Malay political party".

Mojungkim, "deeply embarrassed and humiliated by the manner of his removal", nevertheless vowed that he would still turn up at his office at the Native Court in Penampang on September 1 to continue his duties as usual "for the sake of the Native people in Penampang".

Disimon is expected to turn up as well for work on D-day.

The work of the DCN is to "work together with the Native Court to safeguard Native Affairs".

Mojungkim pointed out that as DCN he's being paid a fixed allowance only, not a monthly salary, and there's no reason why he should not continue as DCN as provided for by the Native Affairs Constitution.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/110725>