

Fulfil Malaysia Agreement or let Borneo states free, says Jeffrey Kitingan

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By Desmond Davidson

A leading Sabah politician has warned Putrajaya to fulfil the Malaysia Agreement of 1963 or allow Sabah and Sarawak to go their separate ways from the Malay peninsula.

STAR Sabah chief Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan said Sabah and Sarawak are among the poorest states in the country and marginalised in development allocations.

“The downgrading of Sabah and Sarawak as the 12th and 13th states in Malaysia is contrary to what was intended in 1963 as equal partners.

“The continuation of the rape and pillage of Sabah and Sarawak’s oil wealth and revenues and marginalisation in development allocations can no longer be condoned.

“Even in times of need, the people of Sabah and Sarawak are treated shabbily and not equal to other Malaysians in the peninsula,” he said, commenting on what Chief Justice Tun Arifin Zakaria had written on Sabah and Sarawak’s roles in the formation of Malaysia in Arifin’s recently launched book “The Constitutional Rights of Sabah and Sarawak”.

“The Malaysia Agreement needs to be implemented and fulfilled,” Kitingan said.

“Not only have the terms and conditions of the formation of Malaysia as contained in the 1963 agreement and the various documents and verbal assurances and promises not been complied with, there were numerous constitutional amendments which eroded the special rights and position of Sabah and Sarawak.”

He said the leaders of the “two nations need to focus and speak with one voice”.

The common stand of Malaysia’s Borneo states should be in no uncertain terms, he added.

“Any other stand will give the Malayan federal leaders the wrong assumption and presumption that Sabah and Sarawak are not serious in their demands for the terms of the formation of Malaysia to be complied with.

“They will continue to remain comfortable in their high offices in Putrajaya and do not care for Sabahans and Sarawakians until it is time for elections.”

Kitingan also spoke of the promise Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had made to the Barisan Nasional (BN) partners in Sarawak that there would be a cabinet reshuffle after the Umno general assembly in early December 2013.

The reshuffle was to accommodate members of parliament from Sarawak whose parties were dissatisfied with the distribution of ministerial posts after last year’s general elections.

“Najib failed to undertake the cabinet reshuffle,” he said.

Kitingan suggested that “perhaps the Sarawak BN parties with the support of (the state's new Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tan Sri Abdul) Taib (Mahmud) in the background should just leave BN and see what happens next since the prime minister has seen no urgency to consider the interests of the BN parties there”.

He said if this ever happens, “it won’t be surprising that the prime minister, deputy prime minister and top guns in Umno, including ex-prime ministers, making a beeline for Kuching to dissuade the Sarawak BN components and the governor from ditching BN”.

Kitingan said the shabby treatment of the people in Sabah and Sarawak could be seen in the recent federal flood aid.

“In the peninsula, aid in cash and in kind poured in from various ministries and other quarters while in Sabah and Sarawak they received virtually nothing from the federal government.

“After 50 years of marginalisation and victimisation, the Malaysia Agreement and all its promises and assurances need to be implemented and fulfilled.”

Kitingan also said there was a provision to review the agreement after 10 years, “yet 40 years later, nothing appears to be on the horizon.

“Even a motion to discuss the matter in Parliament was rejected as not urgent.

“If after 50 years, it is not urgent, do not expect Sabahans and Sarawakians to wait another 50 years for it to be urgent,” he said.

The rumblings of discontentment among the people in Sabah and Sarawak, he warned, are “at its highest point with a slight majority wanting Sabah and Sarawak to opt out of Malaysia”.

“Their sentiments are further fanned and fuelled by Malay ultras and religious bigots who keep insisting that Malaysia is land of the Malays and that the other Malaysians are to be chased out.”

Kitingan said if Najib is serious with his national reconciliation plan, it must include the review and implementation of the terms and conditions of the formation of Malaysia.

“Otherwise, like Singapore in 1965, there should be an amicable parting of separate ways for the Borneo states.” – March 6, 2014.

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