

**Yong: Musa 'washing his hands' off Sabah poverty**  
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Home-grown Sabah opposition party SAPP launched a salvo at Chief Minister Musa Aman, accusing the state chief executive of "washing his hands" off the state's chronic poverty.

SAPP president Yong Teck Lee said by assigning a state government officer to deny Sabah's status as the poorest state in the country, Musa is evading responsibility for Sabah's unenviable position as the poorest state in Malaysia, as quoted by the World Bank's 2010 Malaysia Economic Monitor (MEM) report.

"The media statement by (state) economic planning unit director Ismail Abdullah on Monday clearly shows Musa (right) is trying to wash his hands off the poverty problem that has long effected Sabah," he told a recent press conference in Kota Kinabalu.

Ismail, in a media statement published in local papers on Monday, said recent media reports stating that Sabah is the poorest state in the country were the result of "certain sections of the local media and groups with vested interests had taken it upon themselves to sensationalise (the incidence of poverty in Sabah) with wanton disregard for the facts and truth".

He said the MEM report was grossly misinterpreted, stressing that the World Bank had in fact described Sabah's efforts in bringing down the state's poverty rate from over 50 percent in 1976 to 24.2 percent in 2004 as an "excellent achievement".

Ismail added that poverty levels dropped to 16.4 percent in 2007 as indicated by the state's Household Income Survey (HIS) carried out by the statistics department, which recorded a 5.3 percent increase in household income from RM2,593 in 2004 to RM3,102 in 2009.

'Poverty not gauged by HIS alone'

Yong, who was a chief minister for two years under the controversial rotation system in the late 1990s, however panned Ismail's statement, saying that poverty is not gauged by the HIS alone.

"It also covers eduyong teck lee and sappcational development, access to clean water supply, electricity supply, road access, the doctor to population ratio, and many other things," he said.

"Everyone, including the public, knows that Sabah is the poorest state in Malaysia."

Last Thursday, the World Bank released its MEM, in which it stated that Sabah is not only the nation's poorest state but is expected to stay in that position for quite a while due to the state's economic planning, which does not promote "inclusive growth".

World Bank human development sector director (East Asia and Pacific region) Emmanuel Jimenez said that, while the government has made efforts that have "somewhat lessened poverty", more needs to be done.

"The MEM shows that Sabahans continue to struggle to make ends meet. This is more evident in the outskirts of the towns."

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