

**Sabah crossovers: The date keeps changing**  
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**Tony Thien**

Eight days ago,  
MCPX

the date given was at the end of May. Yesterday, it was after the Gawai festival in June.

This is the message from Dr Jeffrey Kitingan, PKR vice-president.

Yesterday, he was asked by Malaysiakini over his earlier declared date. Jeffrey responded in a SMS, "We have rescheduled the announcement till after the Gawai harvest festival."

dr jeffrey kitinganIndeed, the air of anticipation of any elected representative in Sabah crossing over to Pakatan by today has died down.

"It's all very quiet, except for the activities in welcoming Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to the national-level Pesta Kaamatan Open House in Padang Merdeka in Kota Kinabalu," a Sabah journalist told Malaysiakini.

"There is no talk of any crossovers at all," he added.

Jeffrey told journalists on May 23 during PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim's visit to Kuching that the first batch of Sabah MPs would start defecting at the end of this month.

He had said that between three and five MPs would make up the first batch to cross over at the end of May.

Being targeted, according to sources, are Barisan MPs as well as state elected representatives who are not holding any government positions.

Today, a senior academic commented sarcastically, "Jeffrey talks big far too often. He had better start to deliver to build up his already rock-bottom credibility.

"I shall wait for the announcement but cannot hold my breath," he added.

Sabahans of Kadazandusun origin are in a holiday mood now making preparations to celebrate Pesta Kaamatan.

The celebrations can go on for days in Sabah as it is in Sarawak, which is celebrating Gawai Dayak. Sarawak has a long weekend holiday after the state government declared June 3 as a public holiday.

yong teck lee oldYesterday, Malaysiakini was also alerted to reports that the Sabah People's Progressive Party (SAPP), led by former chief minister Yong Teck Lee was about to make a major announcement regarding its membership in the BN.

It is a well-known fact that many leaders, including Yong, and party grassroots have been extremely unhappy at the way SAPP is being treated.

It had asked to contest the Kota Kinabalu parliamentary seat but failed to get it. The seat

fell to the DAP in the March 8 general election.

A clearly disappointed SAPP leader told Malaysiakini after the party apparently made a last-minute decision to stay put in the BN that "many are in politics for their own selfish agenda".

"I would not expect things to improve in the next 50 years," the clearly angry divisional leader said.

### **Project IC most serious issue**

Meanwhile, a Sabah NGO leader Joshua Kong opined today that all the talks about defections and the constant airing of disgruntlement by Sabah MPs in Parliament over the lack of representation have overshadowed the most serious problem the state is facing.

"The BN has a comfortable working majority. Let them get on with their job," he said, adding that the No 1 priority in Sabah should be DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang's proposal for a royal commission to be set up to investigate the so-called Project IC, or sometimes referred to as Project M.

According to Kong, the issue is not just about illegal immigrants, of which there are some 130,000 in Sabah today.

"It is about how between one and two million foreigners - mostly from the Philippines and Indonesia as well as from Pakistan - have been given ICs and the circumstances surrounding it.

"We want to know what was the involvement of former leaders, both state and national, in the exercise," he added.

Kong said the evidence is all there as presented to the parliamentary select committee chaired by Bernard Dompok, the minister in the Prime Minister's Department, and which was also made available in court hearings of election petitions regarding the Project IC.

"There is more than enough evidence for a royal commission to be set up to investigate the issue," he said.

However, many Sabahans are unhappy that the authorities are trying to avoid the issue, talking instead about the presence of illegal immigrants and saying moves to deport them are frustrated by the lack of cooperation from Manila.

### **Multitude of problems**

Southern Philippines separatist movement Moro leader Nur Misuari's recent call for the matter of Sabah claim by his country to be put before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has added concerns to Sabahans.

Sabah Chief Minister Musa Aman has rejected the call, saying there was no basis at all for it. Such a claim cannot be put forward to IJC without Malaysia agreeing to it, however.

Then there is also the undercurrents within Sabah Umno with Anifah Aman, brother of the chief minister, making statements which are viewed uncomplimentary to the government.

In PBS too, talk is that party president Joseph Pairin Kitingan is not seeing eye-to-eye on many issues with his deputy, Dr Maximus Ongkili, a member of the federal cabinet, and among the issues is the setting up of the proposed royal commission.

The Consumer Association of Sabah and the Labuan (Cash) last year collected more than 100,000 signatures to petition the king to set up the royal commission.

Most political observers tend to agree that apart from the sharp division in political personalities that count in Sabah today, the most serious issue of concern is not just the growing presence of illegal immigrants but the continuing clamour to get into the bottom of how so many foreigners who entered Sabah were given ICs and became voters and the leaders involved.

This apparently has led to the belief for the necessity of a change of not just state but also national leadership and government.

"We need a government at all levels that has the political will to deal with the multitude of problems arising therefrom," said a senior politician.

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