Don't expect overnight changes, Sabahans told
Malaysiakini.com
Jun 3, 2008
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Sabah Umno chief Shafie Apdal conceded today that the announcement by Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi of the establishment of the cabinet committee on illegal immigrants has not fully satisfied the people of Sabah.
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The Unity, Culture Arts and Heritage Minister, when caught up by Malaysiakini at a function this morning, said that though he viewed the initiative as good, the people in Sabah thought otherwise.

"Perhaps they think the initiative by the government was not good enough but you cannot expect change to happen overnight," replied Shafie.

Earlier he had launched of a book written by Foreign Minister Dr Rais Yatim's wife, Masnah Rais, at the National Library in Kuala Lumpur.

On Saturday, Abdullah announced the formation of a cabinet committee on illegal immigrants, which will be chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, to discuss and solve the perennial illegal immigrants' problem in the state.

The committee, which will also include several Sabah leaders, would seek solutions to the problem, particularly foreigners holding the 'IMM13' - a document in lieu of passport issued by the Immigration Department to Filipino refugees which permits them to remain in Sabah.

Sabah victim of state negligence

Following this, a top Sabah politician yesterday said the high-powered cabinet committee on illegal immigrants announced by Abdullah was not new as such committees had been set up before.

In a statement issued from Kota Kinabalu yesterday, Parti Bersatu Sabah supreme council member Dr Chong Eng Leong went as far as describing the announcement as another "lip service".

Apart from Chong, other Sabahan politicians had also made their discontent apparent when BN politicians such as Yong Teck Lee from the Sabah People's Progressive Party (SAPP) gave the BN leadership an August ultimatum - either solve the issues affecting Sabah or face defection.

Politicians from Sabah have criticised the peninsular-centric BN-led federal government of socio-economic negligence and marginalisation.

Shafie added that he believed the initiative taken by the BN government was "done with serious commitment".

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Source : http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/83858