

**Yong becomes folk hero in Sabah**  
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**Tony Thien**

If a straw poll is taken in Kota Kinabalu, there is clearly a new-found respect and admiration among Sabahans for the sheer bravado displayed by Sabah Progressive Party (Sapp) president Yong Teck Lee.  
MCPX

After all, he is the only Sabah BN component party leader who dared to raise in public the issues which have been close to the hearts of native Sabahans.

The letters pages in Sabah newspapers have seen a lively debate on the issue among readers but the sentiments of one particular reader calling himself Anak Desa Bati probably reflects the feelings of most locals.

Writing in the Sunday issue of the Daily Express in support of Yong's "brave action in voicing out his party's stand", the reader said: "It's high time that Sabah MPs take a concrete stand once and for all regarding issues that have been highlighted over the years which have fallen on deaf ears of the government, especially regarding the PTI (pendatang tanpa izin) or illegal immigrants and Project IC issues."

The same reader, commenting on the forced resignation of Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) supreme council member Dr Chong Eng Leong, who has been active in the campaign on the illegal immigrant problem, wondered why the politician was not supported but instead asked to quit the party.

"Now they are occupying government positions, have (PBS president) Joseph Pairin Kitingan and (PBS deputy president) Dr Maximus Ongkili forgotten how vocal they were on these issues when they were in the opposition?"

"The illegals are slowly and surely taking over the livelihood of the locals," the Daily Express reader said, adding that when he was in Keningau recently he observed the night market there were 60 percent controlled by what he called the new citizens.

"Sooner or later, a reverse takeover of the night market will happen as what we have seen in Sinsuran, Kota Kinabalu."

Another reader said it was shameful that a non-Kadazandusun (Yong) was the one to stand up for the rights and interests of the community worst affected by the presence of a large number of illegal immigrants in the state.

### **Marathon session**

sapp sabah meeting 200608 04Yong is already an opposition politician as far as the BN leaders are concerned.

And with his party's latest move to fully back a motion of no-confidence against Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, it is only a matter of time that Yong's 14-year-old Sapp is expelled from the ruling coalition.

The BN supreme council meeting chaired by Abdullah last Thursday had refrained from doing just that, believing that Yong, a former Sabah chief minister, acted alone.

This proved to be incorrect when Sapp supreme council decided the next day to back the no-confidence move by "a big majority", according to party secretary-general Richard Yong.

When the supreme council met for a marathon session at the party headquarters inside a three-storey shophouse called Bornion Centre, there was a huge crowd - mostly party members from across Sabah - waiting to hear the decision.

Journalists covering the event also received numerous calls and SMSes from politicians, friends and associates alike eager to know the outcome.

yong teck lee likas talk 210608The meeting kicked off just after nine in the morning on Friday with Yong meeting first with three of his senior party colleagues separately, including deputy president and Sabah deputy chief minister Raymond Tan, who had spoken out against the no-confidence move.

"We touched base and talked about current issues," Yong later told reporters about his one-hour meeting with Tan, who is also the minister in charge of infrastructure development in the state government led by Chief Minister Musa Aman.

In all, 35 out of the 37 members of the supreme council - the party's highest policy-making body - were present. The other two were away on official duties overseas, including Sepangar parliamentarian Eric Majimbun, who was in Paris.

### **Party No 2 left before press conference**

Yong began his hour-long press conference, held at after the supreme council vote, with the remark that Sapp leaders had received thousands of calls and SMSes from well-wishers, including Sabahans who are overseas, supporting the stand taken by the party on the proposed motion of no-confidence.

He went on to say that the party had decided whatever the decision of the supreme council, everyone would abide by it even though some might have contrarian views.

If the journalists had come to hear Yong announce the party was pulling out of BN, they were certainly disappointed. No such decision was made although it was discussed, he told them.

However, he announced that the supreme council members had reached a consensus that the party should go ahead to move or support the motion of no-confidence against Abdullah.

sapp sabah meeting 200608 06Interestingly, Sapp's No 2 Raymond Tan (photo, far right), who had taken part in the deliberations, left before the press conference.

Some members of the journalists pressed Yong about his deputy's stand.

According to the party leader, Tan had spoken on options other than the no-confidence move - a view apparently shared by the party's Youth chief and Elopura state

assemblyperson Au Kam Wah as well as Jimmy Wong, a political secretary to the chief minister.

At a post-press conference interview with Malaysiakini, Richard Yong - the party's secretary-general and a long-time close ally and aide to Yong Teck Lee - said "a big majority of the supreme council members were in favour of the no-confidence motion."

"Tan, Au and Wong gave words of caution," he added, indicating they were not in favour of the move.

The party secretary-general added that their stand was "quite understandable" given they are holding top posts in the state government.

However, among those in favour of the motion are the Luyang state assemblyperson Melanie Chia, an assistant finance minister, and the newly-appointed state assembly deputy speaker, Frankie Chong.

"Tan has served long enough to pick up his pension but Melanie (Chia) has barely served 36 months," said Richard Yong, with a hint of admiration of the state's assistant finance minister.

"This is about standing up for Sabah," he said.

### **PM's divide-and-rule ploy**

In coffeeshops and homes on the night following Sapp's announcement, Sabahans were glued to their TV sets.

Party leader Yong made no secret of his feelings after Sapp was not invited to last Thursday's BN supreme council meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

He even went to the extent of saying during the press conference that Sapp was as good as being "kicked out" from BN.

"We are prepared for the consequences," he said.

abdullah ahamad badawi pm anti inflation pc 090608 01But what perhaps ticked him off most was Abdullah's statement implying that he had acted alone and without the support of his party and supreme council members.

So he worked hard to make sure when the supreme council met on June 20, a consensus was reached to endorse his proposal for the no-confidence move.

"This is an attempt to divide and rule," he lamented, blaming such actions for the continuing fragmentation of Sabahans which benefits certain political groups.

Meanwhile, Sapp secretary-general Richard Yong stressed the move against Abdullah's leadership was not "personal" but because of the federal government's failure to take any concrete action in dealing with the many issues of great concern to Sabahans.

"It's well and good to say that it will take time to solve the problems such as the illegal immigrant problems," he said.

"These problems have existed for a long time. How much more time do you need? There is a lack of will to address the issues, and people can guess why, such as for the reluctance or refusal to set up a royal commission into Project IC or Project Mahathir."

The threat against Sapp's two MPs - that if they as much as try to move or support a no-confidence motion - is being laughed at since the party has more or less reached a point of no return.

### **Overseas junkets for BN MPs**

Even though the party has two parliamentarians and four state assemblypersons and generally considered a mosquito party, its latest action could trigger the beginning of an exodus of BN-elected representatives to the opposition Pakatan Rakyat coalition.

According to the opposition, the reported move by BN to send its wavering parliamentarians on overseas junkets was a belated attempt to postpone the inevitable.

syed hussin ali sabah sarawak 210608 greeting crowd  
During his Saturday visit to Sabah, PKR deputy president Dr Syed Husin Ali (photo, second left) spoke confidently of being able to secure enough numbers by Sept 16 - the date both Sarawak and Sabah consider as their independence day - to take over Putrajaya.

"It will take place as scheduled," vowed Syed Husin, whose Pakatan needs the defection of at least 30 MPs.

He justified the crossovers as a "very good cause done in the interest of the nation" because of the suffering of the people due to rising fuel and food prices and the abuse of power which benefitted a small group of people.

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