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RCI will help identify the 'brains'

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NIBONG TEBAL: A royal commission of inquiry or a white paper is needed to determine the mastermind behind the Lahad Datu incursion as it was a matter of national security, said Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal.

Shafie, who is also Semporna member of parliament, said the matter had arisen from a claim made by Parti Keadilan Rakyat vice-president Tian Chua that the intrusion was a drama by the government to intimidate the people.

"Why would we want to create a drama? This is my village. All my family members and relatives are there. Why would we want to destroy the village?

"These people who come from the Philippines are not rich. How can they sustain their presence here if they had not gotten support from certain quarters? We need to investigate the matter thoroughly before identifying the mastermind," he said in commenting on whether there was a need to conduct a RCI or open a white paper.

Shafie was speaking to reporters after opening the fishermen's jetty at Sungai Udang here, as well as handing out allowances to 748 fishermen in Nibong Tebal.

Also present were Rural and Regional Development Ministry adviser Datuk Zainal Abidin Osman, Sungai Acheh assemblyman Datuk Mahmud Zakaria and Jawi Barisan

Nasional coordinator Tan Cheng Liang.

"If we don't stop this mastermind, the ones who will suffer are the people. Not just the fishermen, but also the businessmen. All will feel the spillover effect."

When asked on how long it would take before the matter in Lahad Datu is resolved, Shafie said it was left to the police and the armed forces, and noted that "we have the upper hand and it should be settled anytime now".

"What is important now is to win the hearts and minds of the people. The people cannot be allowed to be used by the terrorists," he said, but added that not all locals were sympathisers.