

Sarawak CM says no to Rohingya refugees

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KUCHING, Sept 13 — Sarawak Chief Minister Datuk Abang Johari Openg today put to rest any speculation that the state would provide temporary sojourn for Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar.

“No, there is no such thing,” he responded, when asked whether the state government would allow the Rohingya into Sarawak.

“I am puzzled as to who started it (speculations in the social media). We don’t want to get involved in this issue,” he told reporters after opening an International Conference on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) organised by Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) here today.

Last week, state Education, Science and Technological Research Minister Datuk Seri Michael Manyin said that he would oppose any attempts to bring the Rohingya minority to Sarawak, especially in the Serian and Bau districts.

Manyin was asked to respond to a posting on unnamed social media that a certain number of Rohingya would be housed in his hometown of Serian.

He had said that Sarawak would never welcome the Rohingya to its shores.

Since then, there has been much debate on social media whether to temporarily allow the refugees in Sarawak while they await countries willing to take them or repatriation to Myanmar that does not recognise the Muslim minority as Burmese citizens.

Among those who would like to see the Rohingya receive temporary refuge in Sarawak is Muara Tuang state assemblyman Datuk Idris Buang, a supreme council member of Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB).

Idris opined that they should be welcomed to Sarawak based on humanitarian grounds.

Thousands of Rohingya, who hail from the northern Rakhine state in Myanmar, have fled their homes over the past few weeks following a crackdown by Burmese authorities against militant groups.

The Myanmar government has repeatedly denied allegations it is practising “ethnic cleansing” amid outbreaks of violence in the area.

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