

Don't take Sabah lightly, KL told

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KOTA KINABALU: The Federal Government should not take lightly input from the



State Government when formulating policies to be implemented, especially those that concern Sabah.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal (pic) said although it is not the State Government's authority, "at least get some input from us, to ensure we can blend it together and we make the right decision.

"Because as much as they would like to succeed, they want to excel in these, so much also on our part, we want things to be done properly," he told a press conference after the State Legislative Assembly sitting adjourned on Wednesday.

He was asked about the tendency of Federal to go ahead with policies without consulting the State Government as pointed out by Deputy Chief Minister cum Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Christina Liew pertaining to the tourism departure levy, the compulsory introduction of Khat (Jawi calligraphy) in level four schools next year and the appointment of the new Vice Chancellor of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

"There are several matters we see need to be discussed between the Federal and State like on the departure levy which, although not yet implemented, I think we need to discuss first.

"Because we already tax them (tourists) on arrival but then we will also tax them when they depart. For the benefit of this (tourism) sector, I think we cannot do this. This is a good sector for Sabah because it is a major contributor to State revenue as well as at national level.

"The service industry is coming up but we don't want to dampen that by imposing certain obstacles, levies to the extent that you kill the industry, it is not good," said Shafie, who is also State Finance Minister.

Nevertheless, he said, Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has been very cooperative, as evident by the many negotiations held where they are satisfied with the outcomes like on the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63), etc.

"But attention need to be given on several sectors... don't take lightly the inputs from the State Government," he said.

On the UMS VC appointment, he said he had spoken to Education Minister Mazlee Malik about it when they met at the Istana.

"I said he should have consulted me, that is all. I know it is his right but consultation must be done. How things to be moved, because I know education is one of our important sectors, the very reason why we set up our own State Education and Innovation Ministry for the first time in history is because the current ruling Government takes note on how serious the



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issue of education is in Sabah.

"Because we cannot leave it, to ensure the standard will be what is required. We want to build up our human capital. We understand about the education policy, we follow the existing national policies, only that we want to make sure, to complement it.

"Like for example dilapidated schools which need assistance, which is not reachable by the Federal machinery...so we forward it to them and for assistance, in term of management and financial.

"And I think this should be a reminder to the Federal agencies on matters happening at the State-level in Sabah," he said.

Asked if the State has any problem with the appointment of Dr Taufiq Yap Yun Hin, Mohd Shafie said the State Government actually submitted certain things and its views, including names of several top persons in the State who have vast knowledge and experience.

"We had proposed names, but instead there is another. Although he is a Sabahan, it is not so much which district or village he came from, or what his religion is. What is important is the delivery system.

"But we also know they (the Federal) have their consideration from the perspective of the ministry, probably they were considering other factors.

"We have also considered factors that enable us to propose certain names for consideration for that post...but he (Mazlee) had decided, that is his right."

On Datuk KY Mustafa who quit as the UMS Board of Directors Chairman effective Aug. 1, Mohd Shafie said Mustafa informed him about the decision.

"I did my level best to ask him not to resign, but he took that action. Because he felt the UMS administration is not run through systematic discussion and negotiation. And the VC appointment was done by the Ministry, although that is the right of the Ministry concerned.

"We are also aware that the Ministry concerned has planning and management to enable UMS become an excellent institution. They need to understand the UMS management also have plans to ensure the university is placed on a good track," he said.

On the next step, Shafie said the State Government will give its proposal, even if the appointment was already made and announced. "Because we need to look at it. I have to discuss with the UMS Chancellor (the Head of State) and the university management to see the list of suitable top persons for the post.

"At the early stage the State Government proposed Mustafa because he was an ex-government officer, he is not a politician, who have vast experience including as a former State Secretary.

"So we see him fit to manage UMS, and his resignation is a loss for us because to me it is important to help manage our younger generation," he said.