

Putrajaya's decisions leave Sabah unhappy

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By MOHD IZHAM HASHIM

KOTA KINABALU: A slew of decisions by Putrajaya have left a sour taste on Sabah administration, which was never consulted.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal levelled his criticism at Putrajaya's recent actions in rolling-out policies affecting Sabah without consulting the government, singling out the recent tiff over the appointment of new Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Vice Chancellor.

For this reason, Shafie noted the university's chairman KY Mustafa has announced his resignation and quit his post as chairman of the UMS Board of Directors on Aug 1.

Speaking to reporters after the 15th Legislative Assembly sitting on Wednesday, Shafie said Mustafa had voiced his disappointment with the VC's appointment.

"While I'm aware the VC's appointment is the Education Ministry's right, they also have to understand that the UMS administration has its own plans," he said.

The appointment of the new VC, Taufiq Yau Yun Hin has sparked disapproval from Sabah politicians, who were unhappy with the way the federal government proceeded with the appointment without informing the Sabah government.



Shafie (centre) joking with Membakut assemblyman, Datuk Mohd Arifin Mohd Arif after the assembly sitting was adjourned

Shafie revealed he had expressed his disagreement to Education Minister Maszlee Malik.

"I told him 'you should have consulted me' that's all, although it's the federal government's right but consultation must be done on how things are to be moved," added Shafie, who is also Sabah Finance Minister.

On Mustafa's replacement, he said he would seek an audience with Sabah Head of

State, Tun Juhar Mahiruddin, who is also UMS Chancellor.

Mustafa, having served as state secretary from 2000-2008, was appointed as UMS Chairman on Nov 1 last year for a three-year term.

Shafie lamented that Sabah was also sidelined when Putrajaya announced the air departure tax.

"This matter should have been discussed first with us since the tourism sector is the biggest

revenue earner for Sabah; we are already charging for arrivals and now guests will be taxed for departures," he said.

He underlined the importance for the federal government to seek feedback from Sabah to reach a right decision that is effective and suitable for all.

The introduction of the Khat subject next year, also did not go down well with Sabah.

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Shafie, however, lauded Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohammad for forging close cooperation with Sabah with regards to honouring state rights stipulated under the Malaysia Agreement 1963

"But certain sectors must be given attention. Don't take lightly the input from the state government. This should serve as a reminder to federal agencies on how things happen at the state level," he said.

Effective Sept 1, air travellers will be imposed levies at a sum between RM8 and RM150 depending on the destination and travel class. The Departure Levy Bill 2019 was passed in April