

MOE must consult Sabah – Shafie

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By Neil Brian Joseph

KOTA KINABALU: The Ministry of Education (MoE) must consult the State Government before making any decisions on matters pertaining to the education industry in Sabah, said Chief Minister Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal.

Although Sabah will always adhere to the national policies on education, Shafie reckoned that the State Government should still be allowed to complement its federal-level counterpart in any decision-making.

Shafie made the remarks following Datuk K Y Mustafa's shocking resignation from the Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Board of Directors Chairman's post.

Speaking to reporters when met after the State Legislative Assembly sitting yesterday, Shafie said that Mustafa decided to resign due to the recent controversial appointment of Dr Taufiq Yap Yun Hin as the new vice-chancellor of UMS.

Although Shafie understands that the Federal Ministry of Education has laid out plans to develop UMS, he reckoned that the former must first consult UMS before making any decisions as the university has its own plans as well.

Several state leaders recently voiced their disappointments over the appointment of Dr Taufiq as the decision was made by the Ministry of Education without consulting the State Government.

"I told him (Education Minister Dr Maszlee Malik) that he should have consulted me. I know that it is his right but consultation must still be done. The Education and Innovation Ministry is one of our most important sectors.

"The very reason why the current ruling State Government had decided to set up an education ministry for the first time in history was that the government takes the issues of education very seriously," he added.



Shafie

According to Shafie, the State Government did submit a few names to helm the vacant position of UMS vice-chancellor.

He added that the race, religion or ethnicity of the vice-chancellor of UMS does not matter, as what is important is whether or not he can deliver in his work.

On the replacement for Mustafa, Shafie said that the State Government would be submitting names and it would discuss the matter with the UMS Chancellor and its management.

"Actually, he (K Y Mustafa) did inform me and discussed it (the resignation) with me. I have tried my level best to give my opinion so that he would not resign. However, he decided to take that action (resign) as he felt that the management and administration (of UMS) was not carried out with proper discussions and consultations," said Shafie.

Shafie said that he did try to advise Mustafa to not resign. However, the latter still proceeded with his decision as he felt that there was something wrong with the administration of UMS, citing the recent appointment of the new vice-chancellor of UMS.

He said that the Federal Government must also consult the State Government on other pertinent issues as well, citing the upcoming departure levy as one of the issues.

"We should discuss it first, for the sake of this (tourism) sector. This sector is a major contributor to the state and national revenue because the service industry is going up. We do not want to dampen this sector by imposing certain obstacles and levies too much to the extent that it could kill the industry.

"We want to give our opinion even though it is out of our authority. They (the Federal Government) should at least get some input from us (the State Government) to make sure that we can blend and make the right decision.

"As much as they would like to succeed, excel and to gain more revenue, the same goes to our part. We want things to be done properly as well," added Shafie, stressing that the Federal Government should not take the State Government's inputs lightly.

Nevertheless, Shafie said that he was thankful for Prime Minister Tun Mahathir Mohamad's openness to consult Sabah in some of the country's other pertinent issues such as the Malaysia Agreement 1963.