

SAPP: Time for Direct Preventive Actions

It is now officially acknowledged by the Federal Minister of Home Affairs, Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad that the over crowding of illegal immigrants in the 15 detention centres around the country has reached crisis point. With this over crowding and the "don't care" attitude of the Philippines and Indonesian authorities in bringing their citizens home, it is unavoidable that some detainees will suffer. In any detention of people, the most vulnerable ones are obviously the young and women.

2. It is also a recent trend that the Philippines and, to a lesser extent, Indonesia do not co-operate in accepting back their citizens who are stranded in the Malaysian State of Sabah. The growing numbers will continue to be an increasing tax on Malaysian resources. From news reports, this crisis is getting out of control not only in Sabah but also in the Peninsula Malaysia and Sarawak. The financial costs of maintaining the detention centres runs into millions of Ringgit per annum at the expense of the government and the people.

3. In view of the seriousness of the illegal immigrant problems afflicting Malaysia, especially Sabah, SAPP has submitted a list of fresh proposals and ideas to the Federal Government, in addition to the memorandum entitled **"Illegal Immigrants: Mother of All Threats"** submitted to the government in 1999 which is still largely relevant today.

4. SAPP calls on the authorities to consider urgently and seriously the following actions:

- (a) To embark on Special operations, such as the operations in 1995 – 1996 to detain the leaders and members of syndicates, including the "illegal out-

sourcing agents”, who bring in such illegals and issue dubious documents to illegals,

- (b) To bring in the military, with all its logistical superiority, as an additional and regular feature of enforcement and repatriation of illegals,
- (c) To strengthen and expand the RELA involvement so as to use more local citizens to assist the Police and Immigration Department in roping in illegals,
- (d) To set up a Malaysian Consulate in Zamboanga from where most citizens of the Southern Philippines board their ferry and to where most repatriees are sent from Sabah. If there are constraints in establishing a new consulate in the Philippines, then the existing consulate in Davao (also in Mindanao) should be re-located to Zamboanga. This consulate can help to ensure that only genuine visitors and foreign workers will be properly documented to enter Malaysia via Sabah,
- (e) To call on the Philippines to set up a Consulate in Sabah so as to expedite the processing of the deportation of their citizens. As the Philippines has so far refused to set up a consulate in Sabah, presumably because of their “Sabah Claim”, their citizens will not have the benefit of consular services of their country,
- (f) To require incoming visitors from the Philippines and Indonesia landing in Sabah to pay a bond (say Ringgit 500.00) to the Malaysian government to guarantee their departure from Malaysia. If they destroy their papers upon arrival in Sabah and make it impossible to prove their foreign origin, then they lose this bond. This rule should not apply to regularized foreign workers whose levies have been paid,
- (g) If the Philippines authorities drag their feet in this matter, then Malaysia should suspend the Zamboanga-Sandakan ferry service until a satisfactory bi-lateral arrangement is achieved between Malaysia and the Philippines,
- (h) As for the Malaysia-Indonesian ferry services which are more numerous and cover shorter distances, there should be a complete policy review to

ensure the ferry operators pay the bond to the Malaysian Government on behalf of their passengers. The passengers, who would have bought return tickets from the ferry companies, can claim back their bond upon return to their country,

- (i) To require the ferry companies operating between Sabah and the Philippines and Indonesia to make its foreign passengers (non-Malaysians) to purchase return ticket with names of passengers (like airline tickets). Only upon production of the return ticket (or an onward airline ticket to leave Malaysia), will that the passenger will be allowed entry into Malaysia.
- (j) The Malaysian government should allocate more manpower, resources, equipment, police boats, navy, air patrols to curb the influx of illegals
- (k) There should be more cross-border meetings between the Malaysian and Philippines and Indonesian agencies like Police, military, customs and immigration which seem less these days,
- (l) Malaysia, perhaps with ASEAN and other regional and international aid organizations, revive resettlement schemes for their displaced people in the Southern Philippines, and poverty and socio-economic programmes with a view to reduce the "*push factor*" causing their citizens to become illegals in our country,
- (m) There should be a more deliberate policy in the Federal Government to be conscious of the illegal immigration problems in Sabah and all its consequences to the country, the people and its welfare. On this point, I believe that our representatives in the Federal Cabinet have a direct responsibility to fulfill.
- (n) In respect of the smaller, but growing, number of foreigners over staying and breaching their visit passes from a number of other countries, the government through our consulates in those countries should be stricter in issuing visas to potential visitors.

5. The loose coast line of Sabah has long been blamed for the difficulties in preventing the influx of illegals. I believe that the Malaysian authorities can no longer use this feature of geography as an excuse. The long coast line is part and parcel of the sovereignty of the nation which our leaders, the security agencies and authorities are sworn to protect. To fail in this task of protecting our coastline from encroachment by illegal immigrants is also to fail in upholding the sovereignty of the nation.

SABAH PROGRESSIVE PARTY

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Kota Kinabalu