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## Stateless issues on backburner amid pandemic

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**KOTA KINABALU:** Sabah is hoping to tackle issues linked to statelessness including begging and glue sniffing once the fight against Covid-19 is under control, says a state minister.

Sabah Community Development and People's Wellbeing Minister Shahelmey Yahya said prior to this, they had conducted meetings to discuss these issues.

"However, this is not something where we can find one solution that fits all or come up with an immediate method to stop it," he said when contacted.

It has been reported numerous times that

stateless children and their parents had been chased away by the authorities for begging in the streets while many were also seen sniffing glue in the heart of the city.

Other areas where there are stateless or illegal immigrants such as in Tawau, Lahad Datu and Sandakan also face these issues.

However, their presence have been very minimal over the past year due to Covid-19, border controls and the movement control order, among other reasons.

On this, Shahelmey said even to get things going would require the collaboration of various agencies and departments including district councils or the city hall, the police, immigration, health and welfare departments.

"Many parties have to be involved due to the complexity of these issues; each has its own jurisdiction to see to the problems that arise," he said.

He added that while they had yet to come up with a feasible solution for the matters mentioned, they welcomed any constructive ideas and suggestions from the public.

Shahelmey said his ministry as well as other related agencies and departments were in the midst of fighting the pandemic at the moment, and therefore could only start focusing on other issues once Covid-19 was under control.

"Our manpower and time are basically taken up fully with tackling the pandemic and immunisation efforts for now," he added.