

Sabah Umno: RCI for Project IC not necessary

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by Nigel Aw

Despite the near unanimous call for a royal commission of inquiry (RCI) into Project IC from BN component parties in Sabah, a leader from its main partner in the state, Umno, said it was not necessary as there were other channels to solve the problem.

"We have to see what is the purpose (of the RCI), do we want to find a solution or create problems?" said Papar Umno Youth chief Armizan Mohd Ali.

"Action can be taken not only through the RCI; if there are phantom voters you can launch formal complaints to the Election Commission (EC) and National Registration Department (NRD)... There are certain channels to get a solution."

Speaking at the second day of the parliamentary select committee on electoral reform at the Federal Administrative Complex in Kota Kinabalu, Armizan added that there were misunderstandings about the alleged 'instant citizenship' scandal dubbed Project IC.

"There has been confusion; the 3.1 million figure used for Sabah is the population which includes foreigners. The figure does not represent citizens, they (the foreigners) cannot vote.

"If there are those who are seeking citizenship through proper channels, why should we question them?" he said before PSC chairperson Maximus Johnity Ongkili.

Papar division is the only representation from Umno to testify at the PSC hearing for Sabah.

It also made several other recommendations including regulations banning foreign funding for political parties, limiting the number of political parties and facilitating Sabahan and Sarawakians in peninsular Malaysia to vote in the mainland.

Project IC is allegedly a covert and concerted operation in the 1980s and 1990s to grant identity cards to foreigners with the intention of modifying the demographics of Sabah in favour of Umno.

At yesterday's hearing, several BN component parties in Sabah including PBS, LDP and Upko called on the PSC to recommend the formation of an RCI into Project IC.

'Foreigners can be chased out'

Earlier, SAPP deputy president Eric Majimbun testified in his personal capacity that foreigners with legal documents attempting to vote in rural areas can be chased out based on the Rural Administration Ordinance (Sabah Cap 132) law.

To this, Maximus concurred that if a rural village was populated by Dusun natives it would be odd to have outsiders voting there.

"The committee will study how the constitution and the ordinance apply in such a situation," he said.

Majimbun (right) then proceeded to present several books that had been published on Project IC.

"All these (books) explain what really happened about the foreigners coming to Sabah and are now voters. We have brought this into Parliament but there has been no action."

He later submitted a list of identity card numbers that he claimed were dubious, including one he alleges is a Filipino who coincidentally shares his father's name 'Jerome Majimbun'.

'Reconsider Umno support'

Also present together with him was SAPP advisor Mohd Noor Mansoor who insisted that the general election cannot be held until the state's electoral roll is cleaned.

"In Peninsular Malaysia, there can be a RCI over one person: Lingam and Teoh Beng Hock... They brought experts from Australia and Bangkok.

"But this (issue) involves hundreds of thousands of foreigners getting identity cards, but we do not have a RCI. What makes Sabah any less Malaysian?" he lamented.

Speaking at the sidelines later, former PBS member and now Sabah PKR committee member Chong Eng Leong - who is the author of one of the books 'Lest We Forget' presented at the hearing - claimed that Umno had formed a task force when it entered Sabah in 1991 and recruited foreigners into the party before granting them identity cards.

He added that even during the 1980s, agents in Sabah had collected names of foreigners before flying to Kuala Lumpur to meet an Umno deputy minister, after which the individuals in the list were granted identity cards directly from the capital.

"All the parties including those in BN want an RCI into Project IC, only Umno does not want it... The component parties should search their souls, whether they should continue to support Umno," he said.

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