

Najib leaves Sabah with no RCI on Project IC
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Prime Minister Najib Razak left Sabah yesterday following a two-day visit without making the widely anticipated announcement on the formation of a royal commission of inquiry (RCI) on Project IC.

Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Dr Maximus Ongkili had earlier said the cabinet meeting last week had discussed a proposed RCI to probe allegations of illegal immigrants being given citizenship and the right to vote, dubbed as Project IC.

Maximus, who is also Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) deputy president and chairperson of the parliamentary select committee on electoral reform, said that the royal commission should investigate the controversy thoroughly.

"How come this happened, who did it and what should be done to the people who did it?" he said.

Another minister from Sabah, Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Bernard Dompok, who took credit for the RCI proposal, said it should be done before the next general election.

"Otherwise, the people might think that we will be doing it just for the election."

Decision already made by cabinet

According to him, the cabinet had given the mandate to Najib to announce the decision.

"This is something the people of Sabah want to see over the years. I brought up the RCI issue in the cabinet for at least three times previously, but it was (left) hanging without a decision.

"I brought this issue up again in the last cabinet meeting (on Feb 8), and it was then, that the federal cabinet made a decision....," said Dompok (left), who is United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (Upko) president.

Najib visited Sabah - a key frontline state for both the ruling BN and the opposition Pakatan Rakyat - on Thursday and Friday.

He however flew back to Kuala Lumpur late yesterday without making an announcement on the RCI, leaving many Sabahan leaders scratching their heads.

Not all politicians in Sabah are however in favour of probing the matter. Sabah Umno had earlier stated that it was against the setting up of the royal commission.

Meanwhile, Pakatan has demanded that the RCI cover not just the land below the wind but the whole nation.

"We urge the government to establish (the RCI) immediately and don't limit it to just Sabah because this is a national issue," said PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim.

Did Umno overrule cabinet?

In an immediate reaction, DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang said he was "most disappointed" in apparent about-turn by the prime minister.

"Sabahans and Malaysians are entitled to know why Najib has failed 'deliver' on this issue during his

Sabah trip and whether the claim of certain Sabah ministers that the cabinet had made a final decision on the establishment of a RCI on illegal immigrants in Sabah is mere 'hot air' without any basis grounded on facts or whether this is another example of the cabinet being subordinate and subservient to the dictates of Umno hegemony?"

Lim said that he had sought to move a motion in the first meeting of the new Parliament after the 2008 general election but "this effort was thwarted by the refusal of Sabah BN MPs to support his RCI motion.

"I had thought that at last there would be a RCI into illegal immigrants both in Sabah and throughout Malaysia but this has proved to be premature," said Lim.

"Sabahans are entitled to a clear and unequivocal answer from Najib whether there is going to be a RCI on illegal immigrants in Sabah and Malaysia, its full term of reference, the composition and most important of all, the timeline particularly on whether there would be time for the RCI not only to submit its report and recommendations but also for their implementation before the next general elections."

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