

Dr M's right-hand men implicated in Sabah IC scam
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Two of former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad's closest confidantes were today implicated by witnesses testifying before the royal commission of inquiry (RCI) into the alleged citizenship-for-votes scam in Sabah.

A former Sabah National Registration Department (NRD) officer testified that he and the others stayed at the house of Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin (right), who was then Mahathir's political secretary, when they were roped in to issue blue identity cards to the immigrants.

Yakup Damsah, who was then Tamparuli NRD chief, told the RCI that he and the other NRD officers were flown from Sabah to Kuala Lumpur, from where they worked out of Aziz's house in Kampung Pandan.

"After receiving instructions from then-Sabah NRD chief Abdul Rauf Sani, we were ordered to go to KL and were placed at Pak Aziz Shamsuddin's residence in Kampung Pandan," Yakup said.

He said they were tasked to sign the identity cards that were to be issued to the immigrants, which were subsequently laminated at the NRD headquarters in Petaling Jaya and shipped to the Kota Kinabalu NRD for distribution.

Detained under Internal Security Act

"We were briefed about our special assignment by a person not known to us, named 'Mat Nor'. He told us to issue blue identity cards to the immigrants," he said.

Yakup, who was eventually detained under the Internal Security Act, said he was aware that the operation was illegal, but he followed the instructions as he was a public servant.

"We were told that we would be protected from any legal action," he said.

Yakup said his group signed a total of 40,000 blue identity cards within a month, based on the filled up application forms provided to them.

"We did not look at the forms in detail, we just signed... We know that they were immigrants, mostly Indonesians and Filipinos, but we did not know whether they were legal immigrants or not," he said.

He added that the intent of their action was to increase the number of Muslim voters in Sabah and to ensure that these people would vote for Umno in the 1994 Sabah state election.

Concurrently, Yakup said, his group was also involved in another operation, in which they did not grant the immigrants citizenship but issued them with temporary identity card receipts (NRD receipts) with an expiry date, purely for the purpose of the election.

'Ex-deputy home minister also implicated'

Testifying on this earlier, former Sabah National Registration Department director Ramli Kamaruddin, who succeeded Abdul Rauf, said this operation began close to the election date.

Ramli said the operation was carried out after he personally received instructions from then-deputy home minister Megat Junid Megat Ayub (left).

Elaborating on the operation, Ramli said he was instructed to issue identity card receipts to immigrants using the details of people who were already in the electoral roll but had never voted before.

"I received a call two weeks before the 1994 Sabah state election to meet Megat Junid at a hotel. I was instructed to help to ensure that a state government endorsed by the federal government would win.

"I was instructed to issue NRD receipts using the name and IC numbers of voters already in the electoral roll, with the sole purpose of allowing them to vote," Ramli added.

NRD receipts are temporary identity card slips that are issued prior to the granting of a proper identity card. This document is sufficient to enable a person to vote, he explained.

The other personality present at the hotel then was Osu Sukam, who would go on to become Sabah chief minister in 1999.

When contacted late this evening, Aziz's immediate response was: "I don't remember anything about this matter. Thank you."

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