

Project IC had Dr M's approval, says former DO

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'Former Sandakan district officer Hassnar Ebrahim has admitted to being involved in 'Project IC' in Sabah in the 1980s - and he also claims he heard the scheme had been approved by then prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Hassnar (left) said he was at a "secret meeting" in the 1980s, at which then Deputy Home Minister Megat Junid Megat Ayub had "openly admitted Mahathir's involvement".

A total of 15 officers were at the meeting, he said, including "three members from the police force, as well as representatives from the Immigration Department and National Registration Department (NRD)".

Hassnar, 62, said this last night at a forum on the Sulu incursion into Lahad Datu, Sabah. The event was organised by Solidariti Anak Muda Malaysia (SAMM) at the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall.

Now the PKR Batu Sapi chief, he told those present that the scheme to accord citizenship to Muslim immigrants was started in the early 1980s.

"Back then, Chinese voters represented the pendulum swing and would decide which party wins the state election," Hassnar explained.

"So, there was this feeling that the presence of Muslims in the state must be solidified to ensure that the state remained in the hands of Muslims."

Hassnar recounted that, on his first full day as the Sandakan district officer in 1982 - a post that he took upon the insistence of then Sabah chief Minister Harris Salleh (right) - he was instructed to sign 500 citizenship registration forms that did not have the particulars of the applicants.

"Between 1976 and 1984, I can say that no less than 125,000 immigrants were given citizenship in Sabah," he claimed.

When approached by Megat Junid to help make Project IC a success, Hassnar said, he tried to coax then Sabah NRD chief Sani Adnan to help, but that the latter expressed disgust at the idea.

"These are the people who will ruin this state later, Sani told me," Hassnar said.

Despite years of helping the federal government in the project, Hassnar was detained under the Internal Security Act in 1988 for 59 days.

"Megat Junid called me to Kuala Lumpur one day and he told me that Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) and BN were negotiating the possibility of PBS rejoining BN. One of the conditions then PBS leader Joseph Pairin Kitingan had laid down to BN was to get me arrested," he said.

He was subsequently arrested at the airport while trying to take a flight back to Sabah.

'Umno orchestrated Silent Riot'

According to Hassnar, the rarely talked-about Silent Riot that took place in Kota Kinabalu on March 18, 1986, after the BN-backed Parti Berjaya unexpectedly lost the 1985 state election to PBS, had been orchestrated by Umno top guns.

"We were told to take to the streets and demonstrate. Mahathir had apparently said that it was okay even if one or two casualties occurred," Hassnar claimed.

However, the riot did not go the way Hassnar and his comrades had expected.

Five people died and some 1,200 people were arrested, including Harris.

"We were fined RM100 each, but Harris challenged the fine. He was willing to take the matter to court and threatened to expose the truth if the authorities pressed further. He was the only one to be released without any charge," he added.

Hassnar lamented the fact that he had been imprisoned even though he had aided the federal government in the covert Project IC.

"All I would say is, don't be friends with people from Umno," he said.

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