

## **Jeffrey Kitingan to finally take the stand at Sabah RCI?**

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**By Aidila Razak**

Postponed to make way for the general election, the royal commission of inquiry (RCI) on illegal immigrants in Sabah that resumes tomorrow is expected to open with a bang.

Although conducting officers are keeping the witness list close to their chests, it is expected that State Reform Party (Star) chief Jeffrey Kitingan will finally take the stand.

NONE Jeffrey (right), who wrote two books on the subject while he was with state government think tank Institute for Development Studies (IDS) during PBS' rule of the state, was reportedly confirmed to testify in January but was held back.

Another expert witness who may testify this session, which will continue until May 29, is writer Mutalib MD who has published his own research on the alleged citizenship-for-votes scheme.

However, both testimonies may be further delayed as another researcher considered an expert on the matter, PKR's Chong Eng Leong has confirmed that he will not be testifying this round.

"When I rang (the investigating officer) who took my statement as a likely witness, he said that I will not testify this session," Chong told Malaysiakini via SMS.

The proceedings also return amid fiery speculation of 'phantom voters' at polling centres throughout the nation on May 5, and further testimonies could add fat to fire.

Revelations thus far

In the course of the inquiry, which started on Jan 21, the RCI heard testimonies of migrants purported to be beneficiaries of the scheme.

It is also heard how a permanent resident had managed to vote in three elections before his name was eventually removed from the electoral roll.

NONE One Indian national testified that he and 100 fellow Indian nationals went in lorries to a National Registration Department (NRD) office in Kota Marudu in 1988

and received identity cards despite not having any documents.

Although the migrants testified to getting the fast-track citizenship in the 1980s, the RCI revealed the existence of well-oiled 'black operations' by the 1990s.

Witnesses who testified on the operations – named G17 and Ops Durian Buruk - implicated the right hand men of former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad (below).

Former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad However, the RCI's terms of reference do not include finding out who was behind the operations and as such, this may remain a mystery when the inquiry concludes.

The RCI comprises a five-member panel, led by former chief judge of Sabah and Sarawak Steven Shim.

It aims to probe the number of foreigners in Sabah given blue identity cards, whether these were awarded in accordance to the law, if they are on the Sabah electoral roll and the sudden surge in Sabah's population and its implications and the number of stateless foreigners in the state.

The RCI has until Sept 21 to complete its investigations.

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