

Ex-CM admitted KL can alter Sabah demography, RCI told

MalaysiaKini.com

June 18, 2013

By Nigel Aw

SABAH RCI Former Sabah chief minister Harris Salleh once admitted that the federal government was capable of altering Sabah's demography in its favour if the then PBS-led state government did not toe its line.

Harris made this admission in a 1986 book titled 'Harris Salleh of Sabah' written by Paul Raffaele, Upko secretary-general Wilfred Madius Tangau told the royal commission of inquiry (RCI) on immigrants in Sabah in Kota Kinabalu today.

harris mohd salleh former sabah chief ministerReading from the book, which is no longer published locally, Wilfred quoted Harris (left) as saying that Kuala Lumpur would ensure the rights of Malays in Sabah were protected and would intervene if the PBS-led government took matters into its own hands.

"The federal government can register any of the refugees in three hours, three days, three months or three years.

"There is no law stating the time and if the federal government wanted to alter forever the voting patterns of Sabah, then it can do as easily as assigning the papers.

"Already in Kudat, a PBS area now, over 3,000 Filipinos have their ICs and when they are registered to vote, the assembly seat will be Usno's for the rest of this century at least.

"The same pattern could be repeated all over Sabah so that the Kadazans become a small minority," Wilfred quoted Harris as saying in the book.

PBS, perceived as a non-Muslim bumiputera party, came to power in 1985 after it broke away from the ruling incumbent Berjaya, a BN component party.

Berjaya merged with Usno in 1990 to form Sabah Umno and as part of the BN coalition in the state, it toppled the PBS-led state government in 1994 through defections, after PBS narrowly won in the state election that year.

The fall of PBS was preceded by at least two covert operations involving the National Registration Department (NRD) to allow foreigners to vote between 1990 and 1995, one operation by a group dubbed 'G17' and another operation dubbed

'Ops Durian Buruk'.

Sabah saw a heavy influx of Muslim Filipino refugees in the 1970s as there was a conflict in the southern Philippines.

Wilfred's revelation of the book appeared to have taken conducting officer Manoj Kurup by surprise, who said he was not informed that it would be tendered to the commission.

'PBS kept eye on immigrants'

Harris, who testified to the RCI during its first hearing in January, had denied that there was a covert citizenship-for-votes project to alter Sabah's demographics in BN's favour.

When Manoj pointed this out, Wilfred rebutted: "When the book came out PBS had lodged several police report on the book but he did not take any action."

Wilfred, who was a senior researcher with the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) under the Sabah Chief Minister's Department during PBS rule, said his institute had embarked on a large-scale project to register illegal immigrants between 1986 to 1988 in response to the book.

"This statement by Harris has been the motivation for us (to conduct research) to see whether it is true that this can be done (illegal granting of citizenship to subvert PBS' power)," he said, adding that he did observe "certain patterns" over the course of his work.

It is on this basis that he had also urged the creation of an RCI to investigate the matter which today had materialised, said Wilfred.

Only two witnesses took the stand today and a total of 118 witnesses have testified in this fifth hearing of the RCI.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/233261>