

## **Home Ministry blocked Project IC probe, RCI hears**

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**By Nigel Aw**

SABAH RCI The Home Ministry ordered its officers not to testify before the parliamentary select committee on integrity that first investigated allegations of immigrants illegally granted citizenship in Sabah, Upko president Bernard Giluk Dompok said.

NONE Bernard (right), who was chairperson of the select committee in 2006, told the royal commission of inquiry on immigrants in Sabah today that the ministry had written a letter to him informing him of this decision.

"I received a letter from the Home Ministry secretary-general at that time. He said in no uncertain terms that the officers from his ministry and departments will not be appearing anymore before the PSC," he testified before the RCI at the Kota Kinabalu court complex today.

The Home Minister at that time was Mohd Radzi Sheikh Ahmad.

Project IC is the broad name given to a series of covert operations involving government officers granting citizenship to immigrants in Sabah in exchange for votes for the BN.

Bernard, who was former MP for Penampang, said the Home Ministry officers had initially testified before the PSC, until they were instructed to do otherwise.

"That was the end of the interviews with the officers concerned. I felt then that there was a lot of reluctance from them, and I could not get further evidence.

"I felt therefore there was hardly any point for me to continue on to be PSC chairperson," he said, adding that he then resigned from the position.

The PSC members themselves were not satisfied with the answers that they were getting, Bernard added.

Officers may have been reluctant to testify

The Home Ministry officers may have been reluctant to testify before the bi-partisan committee also because was a cabinet minister then and was seen as being part of the government.

Bernard also said that criticism of the Election Commission on the integrity of the electoral roll should also be addressed.

Those responsible for illegally giving out citizenships should be charged with treason.

Between 1995 and 1996, several individuals, including government officers, were arrested in connection with the illegal issue of blue ICs and detained without trial under the Internal Security Act. They have since been released.

He also suggested the creation of a force, similar to Rela, to defend Sabah's borders from the continued influx of illegal immigrants.

"Sabahans have been too relaxed. It is about time that they defend their state. There should be some form of militarisation of Sabah," Bernard said.

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