

BTN registered illegals as voters, RCI told

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SABAH RCI The National Civics Bureau (Biro Tata Negara or BTN) was responsible for registering illegal immigrants as voters after being granted blue identity cards, the royal commission of inquiry (RCI) on immigrants heard today.

NONEFormer Sandakan district chief Hassnar Ibrahim (left), a key witness during the successful 1999 Likas election petition, implicated the controversial agency when testifying before the RCI at the Kota Kinabalu Court Complex this morning.

"That question should be directed to the BTN in the Prime Minister's Department. They were responsible," Hassnar said when asked who were behind the registration of illegal immigrants as voters after securing blue identity cards.

Earlier, Hassnar explained the modus operandi of the illegal granting of blue identity cards to Muslim foreigners, dubbed 'Project IC', was divided into two phases, one before 1985 and the other after 1985 when Berjaya lost the state government.

"Before 1985, it was to maintain the status quo where Sabah was ruled largely by Muslims.

"After 1985 when Berjaya lost, it became more political and the purpose was to oust PBS which had discriminated against Muslims," he said.

Hassnar, who was Sandakan district chief from 1983 to 1985, said that Project IC had began as early as 1972 as an "opportunity" arose when war broke out in the Philippines and there were readily available Muslim refugees flooding into Sabah.

"When I entered office (as district chief), I was asked to sign a ream of 500 blank HNR10 forms which also bore the signature of district officer Hassan Alban Sandukong (later deputy Sabah speaker).

"There were no specific instructions from anyone and I just signed them because this had been the past practice," he said.

NONEHNR10 forms are similar to a statutory declaration and with the verification of a district officer and district chief or native chief, can be used as a valid document to prove that one was local-born Sabahan.

He said the new identities of illegal immigrants are then filled in these forms and used as evidence that they were 'locals'.

These people will also fill in the HNR3 form, the application form for blue identity cards, which is facilitated by another team tasked with going around finding suitable candidates.

"The HNR3 and HNR10 forms were later brought together and filled into the HNR1 form (Kertas Biru), then sent to National Registration Department (NRD) which was then in Petaling Jaya.

"There, they will laminate the HNR1 which becomes a complete identity card and is sent back to Sabah for distribution," he said.

Hassnar said there were 23 districts in Sabah with each having between one to three district chiefs such as himself and five to six native chiefs who would have to endorse the forms.

He claimed that up to 1985, a total of 138,000 blue identity cards had been given to foreigners through this method.

He added that then-home minister Ghazalie Shafie had allowed the HNR forms to be taken out of NRD and distributed.

'Phase 2'

However, Hassnar said when Berjaya was ousted by PBS in 1985, his role in Project IC went beyond the routines of a district chief.

"I was invited to meet former chief minister Harris Salleh. He said he had met (then-prime minister) Dr Mahathir Mohamad and they agreed that the process of increasing Muslim voters had to be identified.

"I was instructed to meet (then-deputy home minister) Megat Junid Megat Ayub in Kuala Lumpur.

"When I met Megat Junid, he said this had been approved by Mahathir and asked me to prepare a working paper to increase the voters in all 48 constituencies in Sabah," he said.

NONE Hassnar said after preparing the working paper, he attended a meeting in

Kuala Lumpur chaired by Megat Junid (left), consisting of top officials from the police, NRD, Immigration Department and M6 unit from the Prime Minister's Department.

"The then Sabah NRD director Tuan Haji Sani Abdullah refused to join the meeting. He said this was treason and it would cause a disaster," he said.

Hassnar said the plan, which proposed the addition of 130,000 to 150,000 voters, was eventually approved despite protests from another officer, from the M6 unit, who was in the meeting.

"I was then given 30,000 HNR3 forms to take back to Sabah and a meeting was convened in Harris' office meeting room with several leaders to distribute the forms," he said.

However, Hassnar added, half-way through, he was called back to Kuala Lumpur by Megat Junid.

"Megat Junid said (then Sabah chief minister) Joseph Pairin Kitingan had met with Mahathir and asked that I be arrested. So he told me to lie low for the moment.

"I reported this back to Harris but Harris called Megat Junid a stupid minister and he said if we are arrested, so be it," he said.

Hassnar said this made him torn between Harris and Megat Junid, for he was now not sure whose orders to follow.

Arrested and held under the ISA

"After I collected part of the HNR1, HNR3 and HNR10 forms, I flew to KL to meet Megat Junid, but I could not meet him.

"I was arrested at Subang airport, together with the documents," he said.

Hassnar was detained under the Internal Security Act in 1988 for 60 days before being placed under restricted residence until 1990.

He said he had engaged in Project IC because he thought that maintaining the Muslim leadership then was a noble cause.

"But it got out of hand and now these foreigners are even taking over native lands that belong to the original bumiputera Sabahans," he said.

NONE Later, conducting officer Jamil Aripin (left) pointed out that Hassnar's testimony today was different from his statement given while he was held under the ISA.

To this, Hassnar replied: "When I was freed... the police said they have two files on me, one was on whatever I have said, and another is a story that I will find out in future.

"That is why I don't trust the police. Whatever I have said in the newspapers is the real version," he said.

Asked by Jamil whether the police had provided the RCI with a false version of his statement given when he was held under the ISA, Hassnar concurred, adding: "The police lied."

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