

NRD denies issuing ICs under 'Project Mahathir'

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By Ram Anand

SABAH RCI The National Registration Department (NRD) has denied issuing identity cards (ICs) to immigrants in Sabah under a citizenship-for-votes scheme dubbed 'Project Mahathir'.

Director-general Jariah Mohd Said told the royal commission of inquiry (RCI) into illegal immigrants in Sabah that the allegation, stated in a book by MD Mutalib, is not true.

azlanShe said that, while she had heard of such a "project", she had doubts about the authenticity of the allegation.

Jariah was questioned for four hours by conducting officers at today's sitting, but seemed unable to shed more light on the issue of dubious ICs being given to foreigners.

She maintained that the NRD would not have data on immigrants who have not registered themselves in a proper way.

In her opinion, she said, the issuance of such ICs could either be a mistake or the work of a syndicate - and blamed both possibilities on the absence of a cohesive system under NRD in the 1980s.

"All these problems (could perhaps have) happened because we were doing things (issuing ICs) manually back then. Now we have a system to approve it," said Jariah, who has held her current post since June 2011.

She expressed her belief that there would be no recurrence of officers illegally issuing ICs for profit, as had happened in the late 1990s and which led to several of them being arrested under the Internal Security Act.

"I don't think there's a chance of that happening now because, back then, the NRD officers in Sabah had the power to issue ICs in (the state)," she added.

"But now everything has been centralised. Only the headquarters can approve IC applications."

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