

## **Dr M claims to be in the dark about 'Project IC'**

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**By Ram Anand**

Dr Mahathir Mohamad has denied having any knowledge about the so-called 'Project IC' or 'Project Mahathir' in Sabah, under which illegal immigrants were allegedly granted citizenship.

"I never heard about it until recently," the former prime minister told the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) on illegal immigrants in Sabah today.

Asked by conducting officer Manoj Kurup as to why the project was named as such, Mahathir pleaded ignorance.

"My name has been used for many things. They called me racist, ultra, I'm never bothered. It's part of political life," he said.

NONEDr Mahathir Mohamad has denied having any knowledge about the so-called 'Project IC' or 'Project Mahathir' in Sabah, under which citizenship was allegedly granted to illegal immigrants.

Mahathir, who was wearing a purple shirt with maroon tie and grey suit, testified for about 90 minutes in front of the commission in a fully packed room at the Kotan Kinabalu court complex today.

He was treated rather kindly by the RFCI conducting officers as Mahathir claimed to have little recollection about the instructions he had given, while also claiming to be unaware of any instructions on 'Project IC' handed out by former Deputy Home Minister Megat Junid Megat Ayub.

These are the highlights of Mahathir's testimony today:

Manoj: Do you agree with the setting up of the RCI?

Dr M: I have no objection.

Manoj: Were you aware about the influx of immigrants between 1972 and 1984?

Dr M: I was aware, but it was a common thing even before Sabah joined the federation (Malaysia), because they don't recognise the borders of Sabah and

Philippines. So people used to come and go as they pleased. It was nothing new back then.

Manoj: What was the government policy towards this influx?

Dr M: Those who (immigrants) who were qualified and have stayed here for long enough were accepted as citizens.

Manoj: When PBS won in 1985, did you decide that they have to be defeated at all costs?

Dr M: When it's the opposition, we need to defeat them at all costs, all the time.

Manoj: Did you direct that Southern Filipinos be given ICs?

Dr M: This was a process that was going on even before PBS became the government. As citizens, they get their ICs.

Manoj: My question is, did you issue a directive?

Dr M: Only what was according to the constitution. Those who qualified were given ICs. If they are qualified, they can get. You don't need instructions for that.

Manoj: Did you know about Project IC?

Dr M: I only heard about it recently.

Manoj: Some people call it Project Mahathir?

Dr M: Thank you very much (laughs)

Manoj: There has been testimony before that Megat Junid claimed the instruction came from you.

Dr M: My name has been used everywhere. I'm called a racist, an ultra, but I have never been bothered.

Manoj: (Issuance of ICs) Was it a ploy to bring Umno into Sabah?

Dr M: Midway through campaigning, (Joseph) Pairin (Kitingan) left BN. Like it or not, I had to bring Umno here for management of the election.

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