

'Gov't officers, not policy, to blame for illegal ICs'

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By Ram Anand

SABAH RCI Former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad has put the blame squarely on "government officers" for according citizenship and issuing identity cards to ineligible candidates in Sabah.

Testifying today before the royal commission of inquiry (RCI) into illegal immigrants in Sabah, he said it was not government policy to do so while he was the premier.

sabah illegal immigrantHe said the policy then had been to award citizenship to those who had stayed in Sabah "for a long time" and who were legally eligible for it.

"Everything is provided for by the law, but implementation sometimes is not effective," he said.

"Even today, if we decide they have been here for too long, it is up to the government to decide to take away their citizenship or IC."

Mahathir said it was "not the government position" to fast-track issuance of ICs to immigrants.

"If it (was) done, then somebody was not doing the right thing," he said.

Asked about the detention of two former NRD directors under the Internal Security Act for allegedly issuing ICs to immigrants, Mahathir claimed he was not aware of even their wrongdoings.

"They must have done something wrong, that was why they were detained. We don't normally detain people for no reason," he said nonchalantly.

joseph pairin kitingan 010706He also defended the federal government's move not to allow Joseph Pairin Kitingan (left), the Sabah chief minister from 1985 to 1994, to chair the Sabah Security Council even though the chief minister automatically heads the body.

"Security is a federal matter. If there is an opposition member who is not trusted, (the) federal government can ensure he does not have a say regarding federal matters and security matters," he said.

PBS was in the opposition and was not part of the BN coalition at the time.

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