

Don't blame it all on Dr M, says his nemesis

MalaysiaKini.com

Sept 19, 2013

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SABAH RCI In a rare twist to their protracted enmity, Anwar Ibrahim defended his former boss Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the granting of citizenship to foreigners in Sabah.

"I see in media reports, everything is blamed on Dr Mahathir. It is not right.

"The system has been in operation before him, was under him, and continued after that. But we have to stop it," Anwar said in reference to Project IC.

NONE Anwar (right) was testifying before the royal commission of inquiry on immigrants in Sabah at the Kota Kinabalu court complex this morning.

However, without naming his former boss, Anwar, who was clad in a black suit and white shirt, poured cold water on Mahathir's claim of ignorance over Project IC.

"If you're talking about 200 or 5,000 people (illegals) coming into a town, I can accept.

"But if you see over 100,000 people coming (into Sabah) and you say you are not aware, you are just completely incompetent, irresponsible or complicit to it," he said.

'Mechanism initially set up during Razak's time'

Anwar explained that a mechanism was initially set up during prime minister Abdul Razak Hussein's time to deal with the influx of refugees following the civil war in the southern Philippines in the 1970s.

However, this mechanism, which he described as a special task force in the National Security Council (NSC), continued to exist after the conflict and was abused by arbitrarily granting citizenship to foreigners, said Anwar.

When queried by conducting officer Manoj Kurup if the special task force Anwar referred to was the same one set up under the NSC in 1989 to deal with illegal immigrants in Sabah, the opposition leader denied this.

"I am making specific reference to a secret, somewhat haphazard (task force)...

Outside the scope of a legitimate structure acceptable to any civil society or government," he said.

Anwar, who was a deputy prime minister during Mahathir tenure, said the operation was then not described as 'Project IC' but generally referred to as operations by the task force.

He added that the cabinet was never informed of this and he first heard about the matter through complaints from the ground in Sabah.

Anwar had testified in sunglasses throughout the proceeding and his eyes were visibly swollen under his shades when approached by reporters outside court.

Asked about his swollen eyes, Anwar replied: "It's just an allergy, it should get better soon."

Anwar is the 210th witness to testify before the RCI since proceedings began in January this year and is the sole witness to take the stand today.

Mahathir had testified in the same stand last Wednesday.

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