

## **Najib and Pak Lah privy to Project IC, claims Anwar**

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**By Nigel Aw**

SABAH RCI Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim has implicated a former and sitting prime minister for perpetuating the mechanism of Project IC, despite the covert operation being said to have ended in 1995.

Anwar said a "secretive" special task force which was responsible for the arbitrary granting of citizenship still exists under former premier Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, better known as Pak Lah, and current Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

NONE "I do not believe that they have been disbanded, therefore I do not understand why Abdullah and Najib have not been called (to the RCI)," he testified before the royal commission of inquiry (RCI) on immigrants in Sabah at the Kota Kinabalu court complex today.

"They would have better knowledge, purview and understanding by looking at the notes and minutes of the task force which is under the National Security Council (NSC)," added Anwar.

Anwar claimed that the recent handiwork of this task force was in Selangor, where it had illegally given citizenship to foreigners like in Sabah.

However, Anwar, too was put under the microscope as he was grilled about his apparent inaction against Project IC when he was deputy prime minister between 1993 to 1998.

Anwar defended himself, saying that the likes of Project IC and matters related to the Home Ministry were kept closely to Mahathir's chest even though he was one of his most trusted aides at that time.

"I must say, even for Mahathir's successors, when it comes to national security, they hold it close to their chests.

"All those years I was deputy prime minister, I had nothing to do with the Home Ministry except to attend Quran readings and launching police stations in Perlis and Permatang Pauh," he said.

Furthermore, he said Sabah leaders at the federal level during that time also did not press on the issue and therefore it was never seriously taken up by the cabinet.

It was only later when local Sabah leaders complained about the influx of immigrants did he take notice of the problem, but even then did not understand the seriousness of it, Anwar conceded.

'I would have done more'

"I would humbly admit that I would probably had done something more had I been made aware of the gravity of the problem at that time," he said.

Former Chief Judge of Sabah and Sarawak Steve Shim, who leads the RCI, also grilled Anwar on the perception that Project IC was intended to alter Sabah's demography and paved the way for Umno's creation in the state.

Anwar, who was then an Umno vice-president, admitted that he was amongst the leaders tasked to set up Umno in the state in 1991 but said the entire party should not be faulted for Project IC.

"You have to differentiate between a political party fighting a legitimate battle within the bounds of the constitution, and illegitimate means.

"I don't believe it is entirely fair to blame the party as a whole because the operation was very secretive.

"Probably it was only among certain party leaders who continued to support or condone the excesses and illegal means, and they should be held responsible," he said.

Anwar said that Umno should reveal the record of its supreme council meeting minutes and go on record over the matter.

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