

## **RCI clears gov't, political parties in 'Project IC'**

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The government and political parties were not involved in the mass issuance of citizenship to migrants in Sabah, stated the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI).

This debunks claims that federal agencies and Umno leaders issued citizenship in exchange for votes to oust political opponents in the state in what is dubbed as 'Project IC'.

Instead, the widely-anticipated report pinpointed syndicates involving former National Registration Department (NRD) officials as the culprits who raked in millions of ringgit.

"There were no political motives in the illegal issuance of identity cards," chief secretary Ali Hamsa (left) said in a press conference after unveiling the report in Kota Kinabalu today.

The commissioners found that the NRD followed procedures to issue identity cards and citizenships, but were duped by "corrupt" individuals who abused the process, he said in his earlier speech.

"This clearly shows that the 'Project IC' issue does not arise," he said, while presenting the 376-page report to media six months after it was tabled to cabinet.

"The government hopes that with this report, issues of illegal migrants in Sabah will no longer be sensationalised."

Registered at voters

Some of these individuals are also registered as voters, the commission found, but the exact number cannot be determined.

"There is ample evidence before the RCI of the involvement of syndicates and certain corrupt individuals in the issuance of Malaysian ICs and other documents illegally," the report stated.

"There was much money to be made by the syndicates or corrupt individuals because a false IC could fetch between RM400 to RM500," it added.

It said that this problem was "compounded" by the large number of people in Sabah without proper documentation.

"In summary therefore, it can be said that illegal immigrants did not find any difficulty in procuring Malaysian ICs, birth certificates and other documents," it said.

This enabled many non-Sabahans to have access to social, economic and political rights of Malaysian citizenship, it added.

... but polls stand

The commission found that 68,703 people were issued citizenship between 1963 to Aug 31, 2013.

It could not determine how many of these had obtained citizenships by using false statutory declarations or other falsified supporting documents, and urged further investigation on this.

It noted that this is far lower than the estimates of those who obtained citizenship illegally given by the Human Rights Commission (Suhakam), based on research by former PBS leader Dr Chong Eng Leong.

While some of these individuals are also registered as voters, the exact number cannot be determined.

However, attorney-general Abdul Gani Patail said that the number of voters who obtained citizenship through illegal means would not affect prior election results.

“There is no implications because the numbers are negligible,” he said at the press conference.

He added that there is already an ongoing process by the NRD and Election Commission to purge the electoral roll of voters found to have obtained citizenship through illegal means.

The AG, however, could not provide the number of voters removed for these reasons.