

TI wants 'no show' NRD officials punished
Malaysiakini.com
May 17, 2007

An anti-corruption watchdog is flummoxed that officials from the National Registration Department (NRD) had failed to appear at a parliamentary hearing to clarify certain issues pertaining to the issuance of identity cards in Sabah.

The 12-member Parliamentary Select Committee on Integrity was to meet on Monday in connection with the subject of issuing 'false' identity card in Sabah, which is sometimes called 'Project M'. But it was put off at the last minute after NRD officials who were slated to testify could not attend.

"It is a serious matter and indicates an unbecoming attitude of an agency when a meeting called by the parliamentary select committee can be rejected," said Ramon V Navaratnam, who is president Transparency International Malaysia.

"This is also a disrespectful to Parliament and reflects the standard and quality of administration of this country."

Ramon added that NRD must be held accountable for the issuance of identity cards in Sabah where there is apparent widespread abuse.

"Tough disciplinary action must be taken against individuals and agencies that do not heed parliamentary meetings seriously," he said.

It has been alleged that Project M - where IC cards were issued to foreigners based on false statutory declarations - has resulted in the extraordinary increase of foreigners resulting in their numbers exceeding Sabahans in the state population.

One estimate has put the foreigners in Sabah as around 1.75 million, compared to 1.5 million genuine locals in Sabah.

Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang decried that this has also resulted in "tens if not hundreds of thousands of foreigners fraudulently exercising the right to vote, changing the political power equation in Sabah state".

According to the veteran politician, in the 1999 electoral rolls, there were 150,000 Sabah-born registered voters who were born between 1952 and 1960.

"However, according to the Sabah Statistics Department, there was only an increase of 120,000 persons based on birth registration – as the state population in 1951 was 334,141 and in 1960, 454,421.

Lim argued that if an estimated 80 percent in this group registered as voters, there would only be about 100,000 Sabah-born voters for this period – which would mean that about one-third of voters allegedly born in Sabah between 1952 and 1960 were foreigners with ICs issued fraudulently with the use of false statutory declaration under Project M.

Dr M called to testify

Former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad spoke for the first time on Project M in an exclusive interview with malaysiakini last week.

Mahathir revealed that “some people” were involved in issuing IC cards to foreigners in Sabah but denied the ruling Umno or himself were involved in the secret plan allegedly to pad up the electoral rolls with illegal immigrants.

Lim, who is deputy chair of the select committee, has called for Mahathir to appear before the committee to testify on the matter.

Parliamentary Select Committee on Integrity

- Chair
Bernard Dompok
Minister in the Prime Minister's Department
- **Lim Kit Siang** DAP - Ipoh Timur
- **Dr Wan Hashim Wan Teh** BN - Gerik
- **Rosnah Abdul Rashid Shirlin** BN - Papar
- **Teng Boon Soon** BN - Tebrau
- **Dr James Dawos Mamit** BN - Mambong
- **Devamany Krishnasamy** BN - Cameron Highlands
- **Tan Lian Hoe** BN - Bukit Gantang
- **Richard Riot Jaem** BN - Serian
- **Eric Enchin Majimbun** BN - Sepanggar
- **Edmond Chong Ket Wah** BN - Batu Sapi
- **Ab Halim Ab Rahman** PAS - Pengkalan Chepa

Azlan Zamhari / Malaysiakini

Transparency International urged that prompt action should be taken in probing Project M.

“The integrity, accountability and transparency of our government will be open to wide speculation, doubt and unfavourable comment, both domestically and internationally, if this matter is not treated with seriousness and utmost priority as this matter has led to an impasse to the problems of illegal immigrants and foreigners,” said Ramon.

Meanwhile, Ramon also expressed regrets over Bernard Dompok’s shock resignation as head of the select committee.

He appealed to the government to request Dompok to return to the post as chairman of the committee.

Dompok, who is minister in the Prime Minister’s Department, yesterday said that as a member of the cabinet, he might not be able to do justice to the tasks assigned to the

committee by Parliament.

It is believed that the committee is turning too hot a potato for the minister to handle.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.

Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/67387>