

**PM to announce Sabah illegal immigrant RCI at right time, says minister**  
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**By Lisa J. Ariffin**

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 19 — A Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) to probe the illegal immigrant issue in Sabah will be done at the right time, United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (Upko) president Tan Sri Bernard Dompok said today.

"The Cabinet has decided that the prime minister will be the one to talk about this matter at a more opportune time," the Plantation, Industries and Commodities Minister was quoted as saying by The Star Online today.

"I cannot say anything more about it," the leader of the Sabah-based party added.

Dompok had earlier this week announced the Cabinet had agreed to form the RCI to look into the steady influx of illegal immigrants into the east Malaysian state.

However, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak failed to announce the formation of a RCI as was expected on his two-day working visit to Sabah yesterday.

This prompted DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang to question if the recent claim by Sabah ministers that Cabinet had agreed to the RCI was merely "hot air", made without any factual basis.

However, Dompok today assured that Najib would make the announcement on the RCI soon, adding that the PM would have more to say at the right time.

In a press statement yesterday, Lim demanded that once formed, Najib must reveal the RCI's terms of reference, composition and deadline to ensure that its recommendations are implemented before the coming elections.

Lim, who has been a strong advocate of the RCI, noted that he has been raising the issue of illegal immigrants in Sabah for over three decades now but politicians across the divide have been turning a deaf ear to his demands.

The huge population of illegal immigrants in Sabah, he said, has been creating political, economic, social and security problems for locals, and is making them feel as if they have become "foreigners in their own homeland".

The call for the setting up of a RCI has received the support of the eight Sabah Barisan Nasional component parties as well as the opposition.

The presence of illegal immigrants has been the main contributing factor in Sabah's population explosion from 636,431 people in 1970 to 2,449,389 in 2000, or an increase of 285 per cent.

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