

**Sabah BN push for RCI on illegals before Najib's weekend visit**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
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**By Shannon Teoh**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 20 — Umno's allies in Sabah ratcheted pressure for a royal commission of inquiry (RCI) into the illegal immigrant problem there last week when the state Barisan Nasional (BN) sent its recommendations for the panel to Datuk Seri Najib Razak ahead of his visit this weekend.

The Malaysian Insider understands that a special committee, headed by Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) president Tan Sri Joseph Pairin Kitingan (picture), has spent over a month finalising the terms of reference for the RCI into the influx of illegals, who have been blamed for the rise in social and economic problems there.

"The problem is that PBS was quite slow. But now that they have submitted the report, we are hoping Najib will announce it when he comes this weekend," a Sabah BN leader told The Malaysian Insider.

However, he said that candidates to sit in the RCI have yet to be finalised with the likes of Tan Sri Richard Malanjum, Chief Judge for Sabah and Sarawak, and Tan Sri Simon Sipaun, former vice-chairman of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia, among suggested names.

The Umno president flies to Sabah today for a two-day visit that begins with stops in Kota Kinabalu and Sandakan.

PBS, which is Barisan Nasional's (BN) largest Sabah-based party, called last week for the RCI to be formed before polls that must be called within a year as it would have little value after that.

Deputy president Datuk Seri Maximus Ongkili said his party had resolved at its November 2011 congress that an RCI into the influx of illegals must be formed in 12 months.

"We have put our party on the line for that; we want it. It must be done by this year. But the opportune time, of course, is before elections. Let's face it, it will not have much value if announced after elections," he told The Malaysian Insider.

United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (UPKO) president Tan Sri Bernard Dompok was also reported to have said this week that the RCI must be announced before Parliament is dissolved to be seen as credible.

"I've put my political life on the chopping block. If this isn't resolved, my position in the Cabinet will be untenable.

"Besides, the act of not proceeding with the RCI will say a lot about the government's attitude to the Kadazandusun Murut communities," he was quoted as saying by The Star.

According to replies provided in Parliament last year, Sabah's population was 651,304 in 1970 and grew to 929,299 a decade later. But in the two decades following 1980, the state's population rose by a staggering 1.5 million people, reaching 2,468,246 by 2000.

Media reports said that, as of 2010, this number has grown further to 3.12 million, with foreigners making up a sizeable 27 per cent or 889,799 of the population.

Opposition leaders have long railed against the BN government for this unusual population explosion, alleging that illegals have been allowed into the east Malaysian state, and given MyKads and voting rights to help the ruling coalition remain in control.

In early February, Dompok had revealed that the Cabinet had agreed to form the RCI.

Najib was widely expected to announce the panel into what Sabah BN leaders say is the top election issue there when he visited later the same month but the prime minister left without speaking on the issue.

This sparked rumours and Internet news reports of the possibility that Najib had backpedalled on the Cabinet's decision, with some even claiming a "secret meeting" of Umno warlords had warned the BN chief it would lose a sizeable chunk of votes if the RCI were to lead to a crackdown on the state's massive population of illegals.

A Sabah BN insider later told The Malaysian Insider that Cabinet meeting minutes showed that it had agreed to the RCI on February 8 and tasked Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz to co-ordinate the scope of the RCI's investigation.

He said Najib's unexpected silence on the issue had not only angered but also embarrassed Sabah BN leaders, particularly those in UPKO and PBS, who have been trumpeting their success in pushing for the RCI.

The PM has been coy on the status of the RCI, only saying at a press conference on February 23 that it was still under consideration.

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