

**No Directive To Issue IC To Unqualified Immigrants - Dr Mahathir
Bernama
March 16, 2013**

PAPAR, March 16 (Bernama) -- The government had never issued any directive to any quarters to issue identity cards (IC) or citizenship to immigrants in Sabah, who were not qualified.

As such, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said, the people of Sabah could not blame the government during his administration over cases of fraud committed by certain parties for self-interest.

"I am aware the issue (IC project) is getting the attention of the people. I have been told, there were those who were not qualified, having just arrived, who received IC.

"This is not our directive, not the government's directive...this is fraud on the part of the officers in the area because of other interests," he told reporters after delivering a keynote address in conjunction with 'Mind Talk with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad' at the Papar Community Hall near here Saturday.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked to comment on the opposition campaign trend which was aggressively playing up the issue of 'IC Project' to garner the people's support, in view of the coming general election.

He clarified that many people who were not from this country were made citizens because they had stayed in the country for a long time and had mastered the national language.

"Many of us are from other countries, for example from China, Arab (countries) and India. All of them have stayed here for a long time and are loyal to this country. We give them citizenship if they meet the necessary conditions," he said.

In another development, Dr Mahathir, when asked if the government was capable of increasing the oil royalty to Sabah which currently stood at five per cent, said the government's practice was to share riches with all citizens of the country.

Prior to this, the opposition pact, in its 13th General Election manifesto, promised 20 per cent oil royalty to the people of Sabah.

"If they (opposition) want to give (higher)...then, give 100 per cent to Sabah," said Dr Mahathir, who was prime minister for 22 years since 1981 before stepping down in 2003.

On the setting up of the special security area, Eastern Sabah Security Command in Sabah, following the intrusion by foreign terrorists in Lahad Datu, Dr Mahathir said the move was apt and timely, seeing the significant security threat in the national waters.

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