

Mahathir blames Anwar for Project IC
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The former premier says his then deputy was directly involved in granting citizenships to immigrants in Sabah, and accused the latter of acting on his own at times.

PETALING JAYA: Former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad today claimed that his former deputy and current Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim was the main man behind citizenship-for-votes to immigrants in Sabah in the 1990s.

Clearly disputing Anwar's previous claims of ignorance on the matter, Mahathir said the former was directly involved in the so-called "Project IC", adding that at times, he (Anwar) had acted without orders from him (Mahathir).

"He normally takes the initiative and sometimes do more [than is required]," online news portal Malaysiakini quoted Mahathir as saying at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur today.

"What happens on the ground is often different from the directive [from above]," added Mahathir.

He said that Anwar and other implementing officers in Sabah had at times failed to follow instructions from him, adding that the government had taken action against these errant officers.

Mahathir was responding to questions if he had ordered Anwar to issue ICs to unqualified immigrants in Sabah so that they could be registered as voters who would support Barisan Nasional.

Mahathir responded by saying that Anwar had a hand in possible illegal actions and abuses, adding that he knew of possible wrongdoings by Anwar.

He also said that he will testify before the ongoing Royal Commission of Inquiry into illegals in Sabah if called

Anwar claimed to be in the dark

Last week, Anwar told reporters that he was ready to testify at the RCI but quickly added that he was also in the dark about the project.

"I have no problem whatsoever. I knew for a long time the project was under the prime minister, that it did not involve a Cabinet process, so it is the full responsibility of the prime minister and finance minister.

"When I was there, even I was not briefed on the issue [of providing citizenship to immigrants]," Anwar said.

He also said that the RCI had not summoned him because "they know I have nothing to do with it".

Anwar's response had come following a call from Sabah Umno liaison deputy chief Salleh Said Keruak who had challenged the PKR leader to tell the truth about the illegal immigrants to the RCI tasked with looking into the long-standing problem in the state.

He said that Anwar was duty-bound to do so as he was deputy prime minister at that particular period, adding that "he was a powerful man and knew what was going on in Sabah".

Jeffrey: Anwar was in charge

Sabah's veteran politician Jeffrey Kitingan had also expressed hope that Anwar would "tell the truth" if he ends up testifying in the RCI.

"However, I do hope he would tell the truth about his own role in the citizenship fiasco," Jeffrey told FMT last week.

"From what I know, he was indeed in charge of Sabah [for Umno]. He was the director of operations and was involved actively in the citizenship project," he added.

"I am very sure he was in the know of what was happening in Sabah at that time."

"I am sure Anwar, being the second most powerful Umno leader at that period, would not have been ignorant of what the then prime minister and Umno were doing to win at all costs in Sabah," he said.

"As I said, he knows more about the citizenship project than many others and if he is indeed called up to testify at the RCI, I sincerely hope he would tell the truth," he said.

Mahathir had previously admitted that the citizenship-for-votes scheme in Sabah had occurred in the 1990s during his premiership.

He, however, had said Sabah's illegal immigrants deserved their citizenships given that the law allowed for it if a person had stayed in the country for more than 10 years.

"It was a coincidence that they were given citizenship during election time," he had said.

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