

No phantom voters in Sabah, claims controversial Sulu leader at RCI
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There are no phantom voters in Sabah nor is the state flooded with illegal immigrants, controversial Sulu leader Datu Akjan Ali Muhammad today told the Royal Commission of Inquiry on illegal immigrants in Sabah.

"There is no such thing as phantom voters in Sabah, it is something which has been sensationalised by politicians who have lost in the elections and want to appear to be heroes," Datu Akjan said, grinning at the RCI panel.

Datu Akjan, a former Internal Security Act detainee, also questioned who the actual immigrants in Sabah were as many of its natives had been living in the state for decades, albeit without proper identification documents.

"The Sulu, Bajau and other natives here in Sabah are no different from the Chinese, Indians and Pakistanis. They are all immigrants who have been residing in Malaysia for years and helped the country to progress and develop.

"Contrary to what most people say and think, there are not that many illegal immigrants in Sabah or Malaysia for that matter," Datu Akjan cheerfully said.

The father of 28 children by three wives also denied that he had ever been involved in Project IC.

Born in Kampung Limau-limauan, Kudat, in 1957, the 56-year-old Datu Akjan was detained under the ISA in 1995 together with several others for distribution of fake identity cards to non-Malaysians, Filipino illegal immigrants in particular.

Ironically, the person who signed Datu Akjan's detention order was then Home Affairs Minister Tan Sri Megat Junid Megat Ayub. The late Minister was also alleged to have been involved in Project IC when he and Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin were said to have given the order for thousands of identity cards to be issued to illegal immigrants from Pakistan, Indonesia and The Philippines.

Datu Akjan claimed that he had been approached by a few friends who sought his assistance to fill up application forms to apply for an identity card. In some cases, a letter of declaration was also needed.

"I am not the National Registration Department, I was merely assisting these people to get the declaration letters and to fill up the application form. I never received any form of monetary gain from these immigrants," Datu Akjan claimed.

He also denied the charges which were levelled against him including distributing 5,000 blue identity cards and 803 high-quality identity cards.

Datu Akjan claimed he had helped these immigrants because he firmly believed they were entitled to Malaysian citizenship.

Datu Akjan himself acknowledged that he had only obtained his birth certificate in 1973

when a relative took him to the NRD and assisted him to get the document.

In 1997, Datu Akjan was freed from the Kamunting detention centre after Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the Home Affairs Minister then, signed the release order.

When questioned by former Sabah Attorney-General Tan Sri Herman Luping, Datu Akjan said he firmly believed that he had been detained under the ISA merely for assisting several people to fill up the forms and declaration letter.

"I was detained for the good of the country and that was it. I believe that police only arrest people for the sake of internal security and public order so I don't have any complaints," Datu Akjan told a disbelieving Luping, who questioned Datu Akjan over his detention under the ISA despite being a member of Sabah Umno.

Datu Akjan also accused the police of back-stabbing him over the issue of Sulu royalty, claiming that he had been approached by Sulu representatives from The Philippines. He claimed that he had been told he was the last descendant of the Sulu royal family.

"I was approached by these representatives and asked to accept the position as the 33rd Sultan of Sulu. I went to the police to discuss the matter with them and to ascertain whether it would be all right to accept the offer."

Datu Akjan claimed that he accepted the offer for the sake of the country as he didn't want any claims on Sabah by the Sulu people in The Philippines.

Instead, he became the subject of criticism and the focus of a police investigation.

He also claimed that despite many false allegations made against him by various quarters including the founder of online news portal Sabahkini, Abdul Mutalib Mohd Daud, he never filed a lawsuit because he felt sorry for these individuals as they were already old. - August 15, 2013.

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