

**Dr M, Megat Junid were architects of Project IC, witness tells Sabah inquiry**  
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**BY LEE SHI-IAN**

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the late Tan Sri Megat Junid Megat Ayob were behind the Project IC in Sabah to increase Muslim voters, former Sandakan district chief Hassnar Ebrahim said today.

In his testimony in Kota Kinabalu today, he also revealed that the National Civics Bureau or Biro Tata Negara was responsible for registering the new identity cards into the electoral database – which he said was illegal.

"Tun Dr Mahathir and the likes of Tan Sri Megat Junid Megat Ayob (then deputy home minister) were only interested in remaining in power. They were willing to sacrifice anything and everything to tighten their grip on power, even if it meant the natives of Sabah will suffer," he told the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) into the illegal immigrants in Sabah.

Hassnar came to prominence in 1999 when he had then told the Kota Kinabalu High Court that he was instructed by then Sabah Chief Minister Tan Sri Harris Salleh to meet Megat Junid and collect application forms known as HNR-10 forms for identity cards issued to Filipino and Indonesian illegal immigrants.

Hassnar told the five-men RCI panel led by former Sabah and Sarawak Chief Justice Tan Sri Steve Shim Lip Kiong, that he initially felt that Project IC was a noble idea which would strengthen the rights of Malays in Sabah, until he discovered that the powers-that-be didn't care about the plight of Malays.

"I was told that the purpose of Project IC was to maintain the status of Malays in Sabah and the demographic outlook of the state needed to be changed. This was because the Kadazandusun and the Chinese population outnumbered the Malays.

"Project IC was necessary to increase the Malay majority so that our special rights would not be threatened. On my first day of work as the Sandakan district chief officer in June 1981, the state native chief gave me 500 blank HNR-10 forms to sign," he told the RCI panel.

Hassnar revealed that the forms had already been signed by the district officer, Datuk Hassan Alban Sandukong, who later became the state assembly speaker. The forms were necessary for identity card applicants who did not have birth certificates.

"I was told informally by Harris in 1985 that some 138,000 identity cards had been issued dubiously, especially to illegal immigrants from the southern Philippines. The minorities were the Indonesians and Indians," Hassnar said.

"Harris told me that he had met then Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and they needed to process more identity cards to increase the number of Muslims in Sabah. He gave me a plane ticket to fly to Kuala Lumpur to meet Megat Junid.

"Megat Junid told me Mahathir had directed the study of 48 constituencies where voter numbers needed boosting."

A meeting was then held involving officers from the prime minister's office, Immigration Department and the police.

"Megat Junid told all present that Mahathir himself had approved the project. Although I wasn't informed personally by Mahathir, I still believed him as a project of such a magnitude couldn't have been approved without his knowledge," Hassnar said.

"Megat Junid met me again in Kuala Lumpur and told me to stop all activities on Project IC until the situation cooled down. He told me to pass a message to Harris and ask him to lie low.

"Harris later called him a stupid Minister."

Asked how he felt about being told to lie low, Hassnar said there was always bound to be casualties in any struggle and he felt that upholding the rights of Muslims in Sabah was a valiant and noble cause.

In 1988, Hassnar was waiting to board a flight back to Kota Kinabalu at the Subang International Airport when he was arrested by a team of officers from the police Special Branch. He was detained for 60 days under the Internal Security Act before being placed under house arrest under the Restricted Residence Act.

Hassnar said he didn't feel he had broken any laws as his cause was for the survival of the Malays. He added that if he had broken any laws or wronged Malaysia, then he should have been charged in court.

He now felt compelled to come forward and spill the beans on Project IC when he saw how it had been grossly misused and allowed to spiral out of control. The natives of Sabah, including the Bumiputras, were no longer the heirs to the land.

The illegal immigrants who had been issued identity cards now occupy a position above even the Bumiputras in Sabah. They have monopolised and grabbed the lion's share of education benefits, housing and business opportunities.

"The original principle of Project IC was to safeguard and protect the interests of Malays in Sabah, that is not the way events have unfolded," Hassnar said, citing an example where a transport company operating in Kota Kinabalu was owned and operated by an Indonesian who had been issued an identity card.

"Sabahans who want to make a living have to migrate to Peninsular Malaysia to find employment or sell their bodies here. Everything has been given to these naturalised illegal immigrants without a thought for the welfare of the original Bumiputras."

Hassnar didn't mince his words when he spoke about the police and their apparent ineffectiveness, saying he used to own 10,800 acres of land. However, it has since dwindled to less than 2,000 acres after a major portion was stolen via fraud and forged documents.

"I have lodged numerous police reports on various issues including the theft of my land and Project IC, but on each occasion, the police kept silent," he added.

But he said that the project backfired when the Bumiputra community in Sabah was slowly sidelined and their special rights were usurped by a new breed of "Bumiputras".

"This new breed were the illegal immigrants who had been issued Malaysian identity cards," Hassnar said.

He then cited the example of reserve land which had been set aside for Bumiputra were taken up by Bugis settlers who had obtained identity cards via Project IC. – August 16, 2013.

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