

I had nothing to do with Project IC, Dr M's former political secretary tells Sabah RCI

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BY LEE SHI-IAN

The former political secretary of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad swore that he had no knowledge or involvement whatsoever in Project IC despite being implicated, the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) on illegal immigrants in Sabah heard today.

Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin, who later became the Minister of Rural and Regional Development in 2004, said he had only heard about Project IC through his son, who informed him that his name had been mentioned during the RCI.

"I don't know anything about Project IC beyond what I have read in the newspapers. I had nothing to do with it or any of the government agencies who have been implicated in the project," he told the five-man RCI panel led by former Sabah and Sarawak Chief Justice Tan Sri Steve Shim Lip Kiong.

"These are unfounded and baseless allegations which have been made against me. When I worked under Dr Mahathir and later as a minister, I merely did my work and never attempted to be a busybody," Abdul Aziz said.

He also denied he was the owner of a house in Jalan Kampung Pandan, Kuala Lumpur, which was allegedly used to process blue identity cards for illegal immigrants.

Abdul Aziz, who is witness number 202, was asked today to respond to allegations by former Sabah National Registration Department (NRD) director Abdul Rauf Sani and former Tamparuli NRD chief Yakup Damsa.

The two, who had testified earlier, had claimed that Abdul Aziz had allowed his house to be used by them to sign blue identity cards for illegal immigrants under Project IC.

When questioned by conducting officer Azmi Arifin, Abdul Aziz said the house was owned by the Royal Selangor Golf Club.

"Yes, I did go to the house, it is a place where former ITM (Institut Teknologi Mara) students who have succeeded in business gather to discuss about the future of their race.

"It had nothing to do with making blue identity cards, all that did not happen," he said, adding that the allegations were mere lies.

The house was alleged by Abdul Rauf to be the location where NRD officers were instructed to sign the HNR-10 application forms which will see the issuance of blue identity cards to foreigners.

But Abdul Aziz said he had never seen anyone processing identity cards at that house, adding that he stayed in another house on that same road.

He admitted that Abdul Rauf had met him several times in Kuala Lumpur. On one of these meetings, Abdul Rauf wanted to meet Dr Mahathir and Abdul Aziz facilitated the meeting.

"I informed Dr Mahathir that Abdul Rauf wanted to meet him and he agreed. After bringing both men together, I left the room without asking either one of them any questions because I didn't want to be called a busybody."

Abdul Aziz told the RCI that he was introduced to Dr Mahathir by Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in the 1970s. In 1975, Dr Mahathir took on Abdul Aziz as his special officer, a position he held for six years.

In 1981, Abdul Aziz was appointed as Dr Mahathir's political secretary, the same year the latter assumed the mantle of Malaysia's fourth prime minister. Abdul Aziz described his duties as a political officer as assisting Dr Mahathir in whatever way he could without getting involved in government affairs.

"As Dr Mahathir's political secretary, I have to help him in his constituency because if he loses, I will lose my job. I have to make sure that he wins not only his own constituency but also his position as the party president."

Abdul Aziz admitted that he had built ties and relationships with many Barisan Nasional figures including former Sabah Chief Minister Tan Sri Joseph Pairin Kitingan. His job was to gather information on the ground and verify it before passing it to Dr Mahathir. - August 16, 2013.

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