

**Federal, State Governments Not Involved In 'Project IC', Says Witness
Bernama
9 Sept, 2013**

KOTA KINABALU, Sept 9 (Bernama) -- The former private secretary to a former Sabah chief minister told the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) on illegal immigrants in Sabah that the federal and state governments were not involved in the 'Project IC'.

Instead, Datuk Yahya Lampong, who served as private secretary to Tan Sri Harris Salleh from 1978 to 1979, said there were certain individuals who had taken advantage to make easy money through the project.

"Everybody knows that there were people who were taking advantage by selling identity cards to the foreign immigrants," said the 203rd witness when questioned by conducting officer Datuk Azmi Arifin.

Yahya, who is also a former federal deputy minister, also denied being involved in the 'Project IC' and the allegation that he too had profited from the project.

He said throughout his service with the state government, he was not aware of 'Project IC' and only knew about it after it was played up by the media and after the setting up of the RCI last year.

Yahya also refuted the claim that the then former deputy home minister Tan Sri Megat Junid Megat Ayub was involved in the project.

"It's just an allegation. Why accused the man after he had died? The allegation is baseless," he said.

Yahya, who contested on a PKR ticket in the recent general election, also denied that he had met Megat Junid sometime in 1986 in Kuala Lumpur over the 'Project IC' as claimed by an earlier witness, Hassnar Ebrahim.

He said the allegation was not right as in 1985, he left Parti Berjaya and also denied that he had planned a working paper on new voters in the state.

Questioned by former chief judge of Sabah and Sarawak Tan Sri Steve Shim Lip Kiong who chairs the five-member RCI panel, Yahya said the allegations against him with regard to 'Project IC' emerged after the RCI was set up.

He said he did not want to take legal action against those who had made the serious allegations against him, but suggested that they sue the government to prove their claims in court.

At this juncture, Shim said this was a political issue that must be settled out of court and stressed that suing the government was not a viable option.

Then questioned by Azmi, Yahya said the influx of foreign immigrants into Sabah did not affect the state's political structure.

The 204th witness, Nasir Abdullah from Jolo Island in the Philippines, told the RCI that he returned the blue identity card (IC) which he received in 1993 to the National Registration

Department (NRD) in Sandakan as he was told that the IC had been issued to him without going through the valid process.

Nasir, who has been living in Sabah for over 30 years, said he had voted three times while in possession of the IC.

Nasir, who has been residing at the Kg Bahagia Settlement Scheme, Sandakan since 1984, also said that he had obtained the IC at the settlement through a friend.

"I gave two photographs of myself and my thumb prints and then handed over my documents to my friend. After a month, he brought the IC to me," he related on how he obtained the IC.

Mulhussin Usman, also from the Philippines and who has stayed in this country for almost 30 years, said while he was working in a factory in Lahad Datu, his employer took him to the police complex there where he was given a "kad operasi bersih", also known as the police card.

Relating the privilege of the police card written with "untuk kegunaan police" (for police use) on it, the 205th witness said if he was arrested by police, he would be released, adding that he never used this card at the hospital or in dealing with a matter at a government office.

He said his children who were born here, had no birth certificate and never went to school.

The 206th witness, Sarif Tatah Indah Ablasin told the RCI that he owned a card known as "X4" issued by the NRD in Sandakan but when asked why the card was called "X4", he replied he did not know.

Asked how he obtained the card, he said the NRD did a survey in the Kg Bahagia settlement and he then applied for the "X4" card from the NRD in Sandakan.

Sandakan district police chief, ACP Rehwel Marung @ Rowell testified that he did not know why the police card was issued to foreign immigrants in the state and its use.

The 207th witness who once served with the Special Branch at the Melaka police headquarters, said he also did not know about the issuing of the police card to Filipino immigrants living in Lahad Datu and Sandakan.

The inquiry continues Tuesday.

-- BERNAMA

Copyright © 2013 BERNAMA

Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v7/newsindex.php?id=976413>