

Dr M turns spotlight on Anwar, continues to deny Project IC
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BY DIYANA IBRAHIM

A day after appearing before the Royal Commission of Inquiry in Sabah, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad continued to deny that he had any role in the controversial Project IC, under which identity cards were issued to foreigners allegedly in exchange for votes.

Instead, the former prime minister challenged his detractors to question his former deputy and now Opposition Leader, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, to find out the truth.

"If that is government policy, why didn't he stop it? Is he going to lie to the commission and claim that I ask him to do all these? He should know, he was my deputy," he said after attending the Japanese Chamber of Trade and Industry Malaysia's 30th anniversary celebrations today.

When asked whether he was referring to Anwar, Dr Mahathir replied in jest: "Maybe."

Anwar, who was sacked by Dr Mahathir in September 1998 following allegations of abuse of power and sexual misconduct, is scheduled to appear before the RCI on September 19.

The RCI, which began in January, is investigating claims that citizenship was given to illegal immigrants in Sabah during Dr Mahathir's administration.

Dr Mahathir told the RCI yesterday that he was not aware of "Project IC" and blamed overzealous civil servants for what happened.

He also agreed that the issue of illegal immigrants in Sabah was a very serious problem.

"Yes, it's true. It is a serious problem, which has existed for decades. But resolving the issue does depend on who is the person-in-charge at that moment," said Dr Mahathir.

He told RCI chairman Tan Sri Steve Shim Lip Kiong that during his tenure as prime minister between 1981 and 2003, he had instructed his officers to consider identity card applications and to act according to the law.

Dr Mahathir's testimony was flayed by Sabah opposition leaders who accused him of lying.

They said it was inconceivable that Dr Mahathir as the country's fourth prime minister had no knowledge of the matter, especially when individuals close to him were also implicated.

Sabah State Reform Party (STAR) chairman Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan described the mass distribution of identity cards to immigrants in the state as "reverse ethnic cleansing", adding that natives had been displaced by foreigners so that Umno remained in power.

"He didn't deny the existence of ICs being given indiscriminately to foreigners. He just denied knowledge of Project IC, which is just a label or name given by people," Kitingan told The Malaysian Insider.

Sabah PKR chief Datuk Seri Lajim Ukin said that before the 13th General Election, Dr Mahathir admitted that some 200,000 Indonesian and Filipino immigrants were given

Malaysian citizenship.

"At a function before the general election, he also explained to Pakatan Rakyat MPs and NGOs there is a mastermind behind Project IC," said Lajim, urging Putrajaya to hunt down the culprit behind Project IC.

An incensed Sabah DAP chairman Jimmy Wong meanwhile said Dr Mahathir did not have a conscience.

Wong recalled earlier testimonies to the RCI by former Sabah National Registration Department director Abdul Rauf Sani and former Tamparuli NRD chief Yakup Damsa. They claimed that Dr Mahathir's former political secretary Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin had allowed his house to be used by them to sign blue identity cards for illegal immigrants under Project IC.

Abdul Aziz had since denied the claim and said he had no knowledge of Project IC. – September 12, 2013.

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