

Sabah RCI: Sandakan police chief admits he is clueless about "Kad Burung-Burung, Kad Expo or Kad Polis"

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The Sandakan police chief admitted he had no knowledge of the "Kad Burung-Burung, Kad Expo or Kad Polis" despite being in the intelligence business, the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) on illegal immigrants in Sabah heard today.

Assistant Commissioner Rowell Marong told the RCI that he joined the police force in January 1978 as a probationary inspector and spent a year with the Special Branch in Malacca before being sent to the same department in Sabah where he served from 1980 to 1984.

He was asked about claims made by Nasir Abdullah and Sharlin Indah, about the various identification documents which had been issued to them.

Rowell claimed that he had no knowledge about these documents and that he had never come across such identification cards, including the police card.

Both Nasir and Sharlin, the 204th and 206th witnesses to testify before the RCI, had given their testimonies prior to Rowell. Both of them had been born in the Philippines before being smuggled into Malaysia by their parents.

"It's true that I was formerly with the Special Branch, but the department has many divisions and I was assigned to the protective security division. My job description included surveying an area before a minister visited to ascertain that there were no security threat," he said.

"Also, at that time, I was merely a junior officer in the Sabah police headquarters, hence I didn't want to get into trouble," he said, adding that he might have heard about the identification documents but he was unsure.

As the current district police chief of Sandakan, Rowell said no illegal immigrant had been found to be in possession of such identification documents. There is currently a nationwide crackdown on illegal immigrants.

Rowell was questioned by former Sabah and Sarawak Chief Justice Tan Sri Steve Shim Lip Kiong on how was it possible that he didn't know about the existence of such identification documents, seeing as he was in the intelligence business.

"I was not in the business of gathering intelligence. My job was more about protecting VIPs and ensuring the safety of strategic locations such as the airport," Rowell told Shim, who leads the five-men RCI panel.

Nasir, the 204th witness to testify before the RCI, said he had been born in Mindanao before coming to Malaysia when he was 12 years old. He said they entered Malaysia via boat without going through immigration.

He said the first identification document that he managed to obtain was a "Kad Burung-Burung" (temporary receipts), which he applied for in Semporna and received in

Sandakan.

"Kad Burung-Burung" is a temporary identification document issued to illegal immigrants in Sabah during the 1980s as proof they have been registered in the country.

He also claimed to have been issued a police card which he paid RM2 to laminate. Illegal immigrants who were caught by police would be released if they had this card. Nasir told the panel he did not have this card anymore.

Nasir said he has voted in the general election since he obtained his blue identity card in 1994. He held the identity card until 1997 before surrendering it to the National registration Department in return for a IMM-13, which is a document issued to people displaced by Malaysia's confrontation with Indonesia.

Asked by Sabah Law Association representative Datuk Ahmad Abdul Rahman about voting in the general election, Nasir said he was taken by an Umno division chief to register as a voter. He was told to vote for Umno and received RM10 in return.

The RCI later heard that Sharlin had spent over 30 years in Malaysia without getting documents through the proper channels. She expressed hope that she would be given a Malaysian citizenship after spending so many years here, especially with all her children already grown up.

She also claimed to have been given a "Kad Burung-Burung" before receiving a police card. Similarly to Nasir, Sharlin said she was told the issuance of the police card was to avoid getting arrested by police in the event she was stopped. - September 9, 2013.

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