

**Dr Mahathir lying about Project IC, Anwar tells RCI
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It is impossible for Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to claim ignorance regarding the indiscriminate issuance of identity cards to illegal immigrants, unless he was irresponsible or incompetent, opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim told the Royal Commission of Inquiry on illegal immigrants in Sabah today.

Anwar said Dr Mahathir, as the Prime Minister at the height of Project IC, must take the responsibility for the fiasco and said he refused to accept Dr Mahathir's explanation that he didn't know about the project.

Anwar said he had never heard of Project IC during his time in the Malaysian cabinet from 1982 until 1998, when he was asked by RCI consulting officer Manoj Kurup whether he knew of the project.

Anwar revealed he had heard of the existence of a special task force set up to incorporate illegal immigrants into Malaysia as citizens.

"Between 1993 and 1998, when I was the deputy prime minister, I was never once invited for any National Security Council (NSC) meetings. I had heard of the special task force which had been set up by the NSC in 1989 but did not manage to get additional information," he told the five-men RCI panel led by former Sabah and Sarawak Chief Judge Tan Sri Steve Shim Lip Kiong.

"Even during the two-month period when I was Malaysia's acting prime minister, I was never given a briefing by the NSC director-general or asked to sign any files pertaining to the NSC," Anwar said, adding the Project IC had never been brought up in Cabinet.

Dressed in a dark blue suit and white shirt, Anwar pointed out that during that period, Dr Mahathir was the Home Affairs Minister.

Wearing dark glasses throughout the entire session, due to an eye problem, Anwar appeared calm and collected while answering questions posed by Kurup, Shim and representatives from the Sabah Law Association.

However, Anwar said it was unfair just to blame Dr Mahathir for the Project IC fiasco, as his successors must also shoulder some responsibility.

In a bizarre turn of events, Anwar defended his former boss insisting both Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Datuk Seri Najib Razak were also responsible for the indiscriminate issuance of identity cards to illegal immigrants, insisting it was not just in Sabah.

"Dr Mahathir shouldn't be singled out for Project IC. Both his successors should also be questioned because it also occurred during their tenures in office," Anwar told the RCI panel.

Anwar claimed the excesses, which occurred during Dr Mahathir's time in office, is still going on now, under the watch of current prime minister Najib. He claimed that there were government officers in Selayang and Sepang who were registering illegal immigrants there

and issuing identity cards.

He disagreed with Shim that the system in Malaysia was weak, preferring to describe the system as corrupt. Anwar said the Federal Constitution clearly stated the conditions under which citizenship could be granted to foreigners.

"It is written clearly in black and white what is allowed, and what is not. Even during my tenure as deputy prime minister, I did not have the authority to issue identity cards to anyone, that authority came under the sole purview of the Home Minister," Anwar said.

"There are clear weaknesses in the system but the issuance of identity cards to illegal immigrants on such a massive scale could not have occurred unless there was approval from the very top of the leadership hierarchy," Anwar said.

Anwar said the system had been bad before, during and after Dr Mahathir's reign as prime minister for 22 years.

Sabah Law Association representative Datuk John Sikayun asked Anwar whether he felt that enforcement was the main problem behind the influx of illegal immigrants into Malaysia or was it the presence of these immigrants, which was the core issue.

"Enforcement is a major problem, especially in Malaysia. Instead of going after these illegal immigrants, the police prefer to assign 60 personnel from the Special Branch to cover my talks and speeches," Anwar said, adding this was a major misuse of resources.

"The police could just assign one or two Special Branch personnel to my events and deploy the remainder in operations against illegal immigrants. There are also a number of corrupt officers, not only in the police force but also in the National Registration Department and the Immigration Department," he said. - September 19, 2013.

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