

Not suicide, not homicide, just travesty of justice
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If in 2011, Malaysians want to take a peek at the future of the country, they need not go any further than the inquest verdict delivered in Teoh Beng Hock's case.

Using the old gimmick of "let's get the culprits off the hook" has resulted in the coroner, Azmil Muntapha Abas, delivering a shocking open verdict.

He ruled that the case is neither suicide nor homicide.

This is a gross travesty of justice and serves to continuously persecute the family, who have been grieving since Teoh fell to his death on July 16, 2009.

The recorded open verdict further erodes the confidence of the public on government institutions as the decision negates any responsibility on the part of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and its officers in contributing to Teoh's death.

This is despite the fact that Teoh was found dead, after overnight interrogation, in the building that houses the anti-corruption commission.

The inquest hearing which began on July 29, 2009 has been fraught with controversy, with expert witnesses giving contradictory evidence and allegations of threats and intimidation against the Thai pathologist, Dr Pornthip Rojanasunand, engaged by the Selangor government.

Significant efforts were made to fake the death as suicide, including a suicide note that was tendered as a last-minute evidence, despite the fact that Teoh was looking forward to his marriage the very next day.

Teoh was called for an interview and interrogated for nine hours over an allegation that his boss, Ean Yong Hian Wah, had spent RM2,400 for flags to be used in Merdeka Day celebrations.

It remains a mystery as to why Teoh was investigated with such urgency and preferred to spend the night on a couch at the anti-graft office when he was free to go.

The coroner himself has concluded that force was used on Teoh, who had sustained bruises to his neck, prior to the fall which ultimately killed him.

But evidence leading to Teoh's neck injury came to light only after the second post-mortem at which Pornthip was present, following the exhumation of Teoh's body.

The anti-corruption commission had insisted no force was used on Teoh.

The inquest hearing had a narrow scope which does not include establishing a reason for Teoh's death.

Clearly there are many sticking points which need to be ironed out to allow Teoh's family to

move on.

Therefore, it is troubling to note that neither government institutions nor high-ranking ruling party leaders have any genuine interest to do so.

After decades of political manipulations I do not expect the Barisan Nasional leaders to act with compassion, let alone conscience.

My heart goes out to Teoh's parents and siblings who have put up a brave front and battled on to seek justice for their beloved son and brother.

I pledge solidarity with their struggle.

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