

Mahathir whitewashing his past actions?

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For the past few months we have been seeing a seemingly similar pattern of whitewashing unpleasant deeds from the era of Dr Mahathir.

First it was the Papan radioactive dump site issue, then the whitewashing of Operation Lalang and now the abolition of the Internal Security Act (ISA).

If one were to look carefully at these three issues, we could easily come to a conclusion that they hold a firm testimony of his desire to create an aura of innocence for himself.

Here, I wish to revisit some of Mahathir's responses on the Papan radioactive dump site issue in Star last year, which I believe is none other than a yarn that is craftily spun.

Was he that reluctant and innocent at that time? Definitely not! You will see why.

Mahathir: "In Malaysia, we do have nuclear waste which perhaps the public is not aware of . . . it is not radioactive but it is not good to handle. We had to bury it in Perak, deep in the ground... but the place is still not safe, and we have almost one square mile that is dangerous." (Star Online, 15 May 2010)

As always it is his style to show distaste at those who oppose him, he wittingly chose "World Environment Day, June 5, 1984, to announce that his government would go ahead with the construction of the controversial radioactive waste dump site in Papan and that everything had been done to ensure the radioactive waste dump site was safe." (1)

On top of this, he mockingly stressed that the government, "could not guarantee the safety of the people if they get in the area, dig the soil, bathe in it or throw it over their heads." (2)

One of his cabinet ministers Stephen Yong, verging on absurdity, alleged that "there is no way any radiation can affect anybody. People don't really understand, but the government is concerned about their health and the environment." (3)

Again with gusto, he defended the premier's position by challenging critics of the proposed Papan nuclear dump to prove that it is hazardous to health and environment." (4)

Mahathir: "(I) did not know exactly where in Perak the amang (thorium hydroxide) was buried... We had to bury it in Perak, deep in the ground... Maybe it is a national secret but I know for a fact that we buried this activated material." (Star Online, May 15, 2010)

After a total rejection of the first nuclear dump site by the people of Papan and the surrounding areas, the government grudgingly agreed to shift it to another site.

In 1986, the Perak menteri besar made an announcement that the nuclear waste site was to be shifted to a new place situated in the Kledang Hills 4.8km from Papan and 3.2km from Menglembu.

The cabinet approved the new proposed site before the Perak Menteri Besar made the

announcement to the people. The site was selected by the geological survey department, minister of health, department of environment and Puspati.

The proposed site should not be a secret to Mahathir because it was his cabinet that had approved the site in the first place, with the endorsement of two very critical departments, the geological survey department and Puspati. Moreover, the new site was explicitly announced by the menteri besar of Perak in the media.

But one mystery (not national secret) still lingers in the minds of the people of Papan and Menglembu regarding the question of the factory's action to employ contractors to dump the radioactive waste illegally.

Dr Sadao Ichikawa on his second visit to Ipoh on September 27, 1986, found radioactive thorium waste indiscriminately dumped around the areas not far from the factory with dangerously high radioactive readings.

And worse, on further questioning by Dr Sadao Ichikawa, the factory contractor admitted that he and other contractors with their fleet of lorries had dumped (not buried) radioactive thorium waste in places other than the proposed new site.

These illegal dumpings were fully reported by all the mainstream newspapers and as Dr Sadao Ichikawa and another Japanese journalist, Manami Susuki began to reveal more of this outrageous facts to the public and press, it became the talk of the nation.

Apparently with all these manipulations of his past roles, he hoped to tailor a new belief system for the purpose of embedding his newly coined image of a reluctant and innocent actor in the Papan radioactive dumpsite issue, just as he had done in the Operation Lalang debacle and the abolition of ISA issue.

If you happen to ask any old timer from Papan or Menglembu about the radioactive waste, he/she will tell you bluntly that the waste could have being dumped openly in your backyard and this is the SECRET not even Mahathir knows.

It is pointless to whitewash a tarnished image, people still remember!

Here is one for you:

Evita, Argentina's most famous First Lady was once a prostitute. One day, when protesters taunted her while she was riding in an official car with an elderly Italian admiral, she turned to the admiral and said: "Do you hear that? They are calling me a whore."

The old admiral turned and said: "Yes, I quite understand. I haven't been to sea for 15 years and they still call me an admiral." 5

References

1.Sahabat Alam Malaysia, "Papan Radioactive Waste Dump Controversy" (Phoenix Press Sdn. Bhd.) Pg 76

2. ibid.,

3. ibid.,

4. ibid.

5. "The World's Greatest Sex and Scandals," (Mackays of Chatham - 2001, 2002) Pg 329

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