

**Dr M not the problem, BN and racists are  
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After reading Josh Hong's 'Racist through and through' piece at Malaysiakini last Friday, where he argued that one ignores Mahathir Mohamad but at one's own peril, I wondered what the 'peril' might be.

Does Hong mean that since Mahathir has the goods, as it were, on Malaysians, with his political nous and insights, in the same way Malaysia's economic modernization has been almost purely the result of his 'magic hands', that it would be worthy of Malaysians to listen to whatever Mahathir has said and continues to say?

There is much in Hong's piece with which I generally agree. There is also much with which I fundamentally disagree. I think a robust and intelligent debate is always useful to open up minds, not to dumb down or, worse, close them - something the ruling regime has always desired.

Rather I want to canvas the suggestion, contra Hong, that Mahathir can be ignored for the most part, certainly in the post-2003 context, and that this would not come at anyone's peril -- at least not in a general sense or as a general proposition.

In history one takes lessons and offers better changes for the present and the future. There is, though, a larger peril for Malaysia but it is not specifically Mahathir. Example: If Mahathir were to drop dead right this second, Malaysia will continue apace from where it was before his demise - with all the shenanigans of the past 54 years and certainly the amplified monkeyisms of the ruling Umno-Barisan Nasional regime when Mahathir took office in 1981 and retired in 2003.

Those very shenanigans have spiralled Malaysia into its growing reputation as an international pariah, rather like Zimbabwe or Syria.

Nobody in his or her fit mind took Abdullah Badawi seriously. Malaysia's post-Mahathir Abdullah Badawi honeymoon celebration quickly soured when Abdullah broke his promises and squandered opportunities for real reforms that Malaysia desperately needed after 22 years of Mahathir's corrupt, authoritarian and uneven rule.

Abdullah began making a catalogue of monumental mistakes. Throughout he dithered. He sat on his hands. He was a sorry joke, and he was inherently lazy. As the people of Johor struggled with calamitous floods, Abdullah flew to Perth to help open his brother-in-law's nasi kandar restaurant.

Najib Razak is far worse than Abdullah. He is certainly more dangerous for Malaysia than Mahathir. Najib was defence minister in the Mahathir regime. Defence budget allocations became instruments for theft, corruption and patronage that Najib oversaw.

The gruesome murder of Mongolian woman Altantuya Shaariibuu, a conduit in defense procurement negotiations, still hangs over Najib like the Grim Reaper. But don't expect Malaysia's police, the Special Branch and the MACC to investigate Najib (and 'first lady' Rosmah). The police hierarchy, from the IGP down, is paid to protect the regime, not ordinary Malaysians - rather like Hitler's murderous SS and the Gestapo. Mahathir made sure of this.

Since then Najib has been trying to save himself by getting the media that his regime controls to make him look busy and relevant by saying all the 'important' things. Look closer, however, at what he says and does and you get the idea that he is as two-faced and untrustworthy as his puppet-master, Mahathir.

If there are perils for Malaysia and Malaysians, they come not solely in the form of Mahathir. Nor in the fact that Mahathir cannot be ignored. The perils come in the shape of the regime that has not changed its old spots.

Not because it won't but because it can't. The only way Malaysians will see real changes is if they change the Umno-BN regime at the next poll or flood Malaysian streets with waves of mass protests against the hideously corrupt, incompetent and treacherous regime.

But I can't see this happening, and I'm not going to add 'anytime soon' to this. I can't see it happening. Period. Simply put, Malaysians haven't the courage of their Moroccan, Egyptian, Algerian, Yemeni, Bahrainian, Syrian and Iranian brothers and sisters.

Or for that matter Indonesians (against Suharto). There may be an Arab Spring in the Middle East and across northern Africa against some of the most odious, corrupt, dictatorial and bloodthirsty Moslem regimes. There certainly won't be one in Malaysia.

That's another peril - one that comes from the people of Malaysia and their gutlessness. Here's a question. It has plagued me long enough to know that the idiocy inherent in Malaysians politics that goes around will come around time and again.

So why do anti Umno-BN regime Malaysians continue to insist that, come the 13th general election, they will turn the tables, as it were, on the ruling regime when - and get this - they also know full well, and the Sarawak poll amply demonstrated this one more time, that Umno-BN will use all the dirty tricks that the regime commands, including the Election Commission, to ensure it will still win the election, even with a reduced majority?

Still, can Mahathir be ignored, and will it be at one's own peril? My answer is 'yes' for the first part of the question and 'no' for the second part. First, see Mahathir for what he is: an absolute racist and indefatigable liar. This is an indisputable fact.

What is stunning about Mahathir's racism is that it is startlingly open for the world to see. Which is why Malaysia is renowned as one of the most hideously corrupt countries but, also, where racism is so rife - a breathing, living organism incubated by its national leaders who openly spout their racist cant at every opportunity.

What's perilous about racism is how it is state-centered, sanctioned by the ruling regime, actively promoted and practiced by the regime's coalition of political parties, and even amongst opposition parties.

Racism has been allowed to permeate Malaysia's worthless education system even more these days. The Interlok issue comes to mind. When racism becomes embedded with widespread and deep-rooted corruption, it will rip apart any trust and respect between the races. This was the status quo between 1969 and 1981, as it was between the time of British colonialism and 1970.

It worsened under Mahathir, by Mahathir. It has worsened under Najib, by Najib and the idiolects who run his regime, and the Malay-dominated bureaucracy, police and army.

Second, Mahathir is a two-faced sly old dog. He's crass but not dumb. He plays politics, wedges between different races and different political parties and even between different factions within Umno.

He sows seeds of doubt and fear than of certainty and confidence. He is, like Najib, morally bankrupt and a pathetic Muslim. Mahathir is rather like a wretched little chihuahua that likes to roll over and have its tummy tickled. He thinks he has left a historically great legacy for Malaysians, one that Abdullah Badawi seem prepared to wreck but then quickly chickened out. Najib came to Mahathir's rescue. He will guarantee Mahathir's legacy, and even extend it.

So here's another peril - not Mahathir but supporters of Mahathir like Najib, whose political power and longevity more or less depends on Mahathir's patronage. Then there are those sycophantic Malaysians who are nostalgic for Mahathir's rule.

They pine for him because Najib is weak, rudderless, more ideological than pragmatic, not a natural

leader by any stretch of the imagination, like his father, Malaysia's second prime minister, and has political baggage, including the ghost of Altantuya. He can't be trusted.

Mahathir knows this. As long as Mahathir's sychophantic Malaysians queue up to kiss his behind, he will feel his tummy is being tickled. Thus he remains relevant. He will do and say whatever it takes to stay relevant, by constantly being in the public eye, even if much of what Mahathir says these days amounts to sedition.

But the Najib regime hasn't the guts to shut him down. Nor should it if the regime continues to boast that Malaysia is a democracy. If only it would extend the same rights Mahathir seems to enjoy to every Malaysian too.

Mahathir gets away with murder because the regime lets him, and because Malaysians pine for his craven remarks. Everybody loves controversy and Malaysians probably more so, given - if they are honest enough to admit this - they, too, are as racist as Mahathir and the regime.

But here's a sample of why Mahathir should not be taken seriously. Mahathir says, at first, that the Chinese dominated DAP is racist and is promoting racism in Sarawak. Sarawak's corrupt chief minister Taib Mahmud chided the Chinese who voted for the DAP as disloyal and warned them that their day of reckoning will come.

Mahathir quickly changed his mind. He says next that not all Chinese are anti-Barisan Nasional. And just as on the weekend he also changed his mind: he said that the state-controlled media should occasionally criticize the regime - "constructively", rather like Utusan Malaysia.

This has nothing to do with Mahathir trying to defuse a tinder-dry, potentially explosive racist situation, with its fuse running from Sarawak to the peninsular. It is closer to what Chandra Muzaffar once said, when he was founder and president of Aliran, the multi-racial, non-government organisation that he had founded in 1977, when, in an open letter, he publicly scolded Malaysia's political leaders - on all sides - for playing dangerous political brinkmanship games over race. If only Chandra Muzaffar has the same resolve as he did then to whack Umno-BN today. But they are his paymasters now.

So here is something of a comparison of Mahathir's inconsistencies related to his latter-day utterances, speeches and writings, including his pugnacious if spurious attempt to become a revisionist of Malaysian history, just as the Japan and China have been doing with theirs to this day. Read the Malay Dilemma by Mahathir Mohamad, as I did when I was completing high school, and again in my first year as a university student.

This passage is found on page 6 of his book: "The Japanese occupation served to separate the Malays and Chinese even more. Certain sections of the Malays were actively pro-Japanese while the rest were, if not sympathetic, at least not anti-Japanese." Here's Mahathir trying to have it both ways. Or create a strawman account or an internal contradiction when you are bereft of facts.

Mahathir's indoctrination of racism would have started well before this. For me, though, from that passage on, I knew in my guts where his book was headed, the political turn he would take, and I watched him over the decades, from a wee lad to this day, make himself an even greater racist, liar (read Barry Wain's book, *Malaysian Maverick*), and, worse, a corrupter of Malaysian minds.

He blamed Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia's first post-independent prime minister, of usurping executive power over the party and government, as well as the "system of patronage and disguised coercion" that the Tunku had employed, thus supplanting "party (viz. Umno) authority" (p 9).

What did Mahathir want after he was ousted from Unmo for his rebellion against the Tunku? And what did he do, slowly and surely, in the lead up to his becoming prime minister and once he became premier, finalising, perhaps, in 2010, with installing himself as the spiritual leader of the wholly racist, sectional Umno-backed Malay non-government organisation, Perkasa?

It's akin to Indonesia's satanic cleric Abu Bakar Bashir, who is the spiritual leader of the anti-West Islamic terrorist organisation, Jemaah Islamiyah, with its links to al-Qaeda.

One more quote from Mahathir. He did, though, in fairness, provide one truth with which, I dare say, all Malaysians must come to grips, whether they like it or not. It is as relevant then as it is today. "Racial harmony in Malaya [sic] was therefore neither real nor deep-rooted," Mahathir wrote.

"What was taken for harmony was absence of open inter-racial strife. And absence of strife is not necessarily due to the lack of desire for reasons for strife. It is more frequently due to a lack of capacity to bring about open conflict (p 5)."

After the murder and carnage of the race riots in 1969, the then National Operations Council, and Mahathir (1981-2003) made sure that that capacity was significantly reduced - at the cost of genuine democracy, equality and decency. The cost, otherwise, he has argued, would have been another round of the bloody ripping apart the country.

A larger peril does exist, for Malaysia and its fragile economy, but not completely by ignoring Mahathir, just as long as one sees Mahathir for what he is today - a chihuahua that wants its tummy tickled. Mahathir is a megalomaniac and a solipsist. Stop tickling his tummy and he'll go away to die a lonely death. The peril comes from Najib, Umno, Barisan, and Malaysians with their racist attitudes.

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