

'Barring Chin Peng's ashes makes us laughing stock'

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Former inspector-general of police Abdul Rahim Mohd Noor warned that Malaysia will become a laughing stock if the government adamantly refuses to allow Chin Peng's remains to be brought into the country.

"There is a hue and cry from the public not to even allow his ashes (back into Malaysia). My God... This is stretching the argument a bit too far. It's a bit naive I think.

"If the government - the authorities - succumb to this public pressure not to allow Chin Peng's ashes to be brought back, I think, we are making Malaysia a laughing stock of the whole world," he said in an interview aired on BFM yesterday.

Abdul Rahim, who led the successful peace negotiations on behalf of Malaysia with the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) in the late 1980s, said the refusal to allow Chin Peng into the country, even when he was alive, made a mockery of the 1989 Hatyai Peace Treaty.

The retired top cop, who was then chief of the Malaysian Special Branch, said he had convinced the government at that time to engage in talks with the communists, over 30 years after the failed 1955 Baling negotiations.

Abdul Rahim said that even though the 12-year Emergency was lifted in 1960, security forces were still battling communist remnants in the 1980s, but the decline of communism in the region was an opportunity for renewed peace negotiations.

At that time, there were still around 2,000 communists along the Malaysian-Thai border, with the two largest groups being the North Malayan Bureau and the 10th Regiment, which comprised largely Malays, he said.

With the backing of then-prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Abdul Rahim said, the Special Branch, in secrecy, initiated negotiations with the communists at the end of 1987 and early 1988 on Phuket Island, which lasted for five rounds.

This, he said, culminated in the 1989 peace treaty signed in Hatyai, and comprised two agreements, one containing the core terms and another on administrative details on how the terms would be implemented.

'Other ex-communist returned, met sultan'

"I was involved in the drafting of both agreements, so I know full well that under the terms of agreements, first of all, the agreements are binding on every CPM member, from the highest, topmost to the bottom, lowest most.

"If you say that Chin Peng as secretary-general of the party (CPM) is the highest-most member, then he qualifies to get all the privileges, advantages or whatever promises made in the agreements, which includes for him to be allowed to come back (to Malaysia)," explained Abdul Rahim.

Furthermore, he said, in the event these former communist members were not allowed to permanently return to Malaysia, they must still be allowed to enter the country on social visits, according to the agreements.

"But in the case of Chin Peng, he was not allowed both. To me, it's absurd, totally absurd. It's unfair, grossly unfair..."

"There were others (ex-communists) who were allowed to come back and they were mainly Malays. Abdullah CD was allowed to come back to Malaysia and was even given an audience with the current Sultan of Perak.

"Rashid Maidin, I was told, performed his pilgrimage through KL with the help of the Malaysian authorities. What's all these?" Abdul Rahim said in an exasperated voice.

Abdullah CD was CPM chairperson while Rashid Maidin was a CPM central committee member.

Asked if the fixation on not allowing Chin Peng to return home, even when dead, was along racial lines, Abdul Rahim hesitated for a moment, then replied: "I am not prepared to make presumptions like that."

"As far as Chin Peng's case is concerned, we created a situation where we made a mockery of the (peace) agreements," he added.

'Gov't turning Chin Peng into an icon'

He warned that the government's stance in preventing Chin Peng's ashes from being buried in his hometown in Sitiawan, Perak, was transforming the ex-communist leader an icon.

"Specifically, I think it is not good for the ruling party, particularly in their attempts post the 13th general election, to win back Chinese Malaysian support," he said.

The government had justified its decision by declaring that Chin Peng was responsible for the deaths of countless members of the security forces, most being Malays.

Abdul Rahim lamented that the people do not seem to understand the context of the international communist struggle and instead perceive that the over 40 years of insurrection in Malaya was "Chin Peng versus the entire government machinery".

He pointed out that research showed the communist structure was collective in nature and it was not a one-man-show with Chin Peng calling all the shots.

NONE "I do not know why it should develop along this line (Chin Peng versus government). The fact is that good or bad - whatever Chin Peng is, the background is a peace treaty had been signed. We got to jolly well honour the terms and conditions," he said.

Asked by the radio station how he thought history would remember Chin Peng, Abdul Rahim replied: "They (historians) should be able to analyse Chin Peng as a communist leader - his role and his party's role - in battling the British, in getting rid of the British.

"His role in the peace process - the failure of the Baling talks and the success of the Phuket peace talks leading to the Hatyai Peace Treaty."

Abdul Rahim has been consistent in wanting the government to uphold the terms of the peace treaty and had made a similar urging during a 2009 interview with Malaysiakini for Chin Peng to be allowed back to Malaysia.

Another senior cop who was also directly involved in combating the communists and was shot by them twice, Yuen Yuet Leng, had similarly urged reconciliation.

Chin Peng passed away on on Sept 16 of cancer, which incidentally was also Malaysia Day.

