

## **LKY-Dr M comparison inevitable, but misplaced**

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**By Yoursay**

YOURSAY 'One is viewed as a maverick, the other held in high esteem.'

### Comparing Lee Kuan Yew and Mahathir

**Abasir:** One loved ostentation and grandeur, the other eschewed them. One thrived on and cultivated fawning courtiers, the other had zero tolerance for them.

One was always motivated by short-term gains, the other diligently kept his focus on long-term success regardless of short-term pain. One nurtured and nourished language and racial extremists, the other rooted them out ruthlessly.

One is viewed as a maverick, third-world politician, the other was and continues to be held in high esteem internationally.

One, despite his unfettered rule, left behind a divided, corrupted financially struggling nation, the other transformed his nation from a resourceless, Third World backwater into a first world state in every sense... in one generation.

**Sirach:** P Gunasegaran's article captures the essence of why history will take an extremely dim view of Mahathir's legacy to Malaysia.

**KCW:** Material wealth or economic development is merely one of many elements of what made nations a 'success' story. But more importantly, is Singapore or Malaysia a happy nation?

At the end of the day, perhaps what matters is not so much whether you have the tallest twin towers in the world or the highest gross domestic product (GDP) in Asia, but whether your people lead a happy life or not.

**Ng Sim Bee:** I would not mind being democratically suppressed if almost all of us own a roof over our heads, low crime rate, first-class education, practice of meritocracy regardless of race, efficient public transport, clean public sector, etc.

Unless we want to be like the Philippines where they practice true democracy.

**Anonymous #37634848:** I try to imagine if the Malays in Singapore were powering its economy like Chinese did at the onset of Independence, what would have LKY achieved?

Singapore had been a successful entrepot trade centre in the region for a long time. LKY just continued to build on it. It is a small town compared to complex Malaysia.

Dr M built world-class infrastructure, moved the Malays forward but the Chinese gained more from his initiatives.

In Singapore, some of the Malay natives are still literally in the menial jobs. This critique is very biased and spit venom at Mahathir.

**Dianne Lim:** When the conversion of the English schools into Malay-medium schools was announced in the wake of May 13, 1969, the education minister was not Mahathir. He had been expelled from Umno by Tunku Abdul Rahman.

If I remember correctly the education minister was Abdul Rahman Ya'kub, who was subsequently succeeded by Mahathir in the early 70s. So Mahathir did not close down English schools.

He may have been one of the advocates of their closure.

**Prudent:** P Gunasegaram's understanding of racism is flawed. Lee Kuan Yew (LKY) considered that the character of the Chinese makes for a more stable society.

Whether he is right or wrong, he was not going to wait until for example, letting the Malay-Muslim population increase to more than the current 15 percent having observed the evidence in other countries (e.g. Lebanon) what this might mean for stability. By then, it may be too late if his observations turn out to be right.

But even this decision does not mean racism because he treated everyone based on merits. Therefore the Indians more than thrived instead of being marginalised.

The Malays were also able to uplift themselves albeit with some minor quotas in terms of scholarships and certain affirmative programmes which were not allowed to increase to such an extent as to become crutches.

Today the Singaporean Malays can lift their heads high.

**SteveOh:** A glossy comparative made for easy reading. There is no comparison between the two besides that both were country leaders.

On personal qualifications, talents, intellectual depth, achievements, personal integrity, etc, LKY is incomparable. He is in a class of his own and may yet be the world's greatest nation-builder in modern times.

I agree with Prudent. LKY was not a racist but a realist. Being ultra-pragmatic, he did all for Singapore. Mahathir was manipulative, ethnocentric and self-vested.

Mahathir (and Najib Abdul Razak) were subversive and the opposite of Lee and played to the Malay gallery at the expense of nationhood. LKY was the true leader for all.

The LKY-Mahathir comparative is inevitable but misplaced. Mahathir's comparatives are Ferdinand Marcos and Suharto. Lee and Mahathir's stark contrasting legacies bear irrefutable testimony of their incomparability.

Their common shame - the merciless, cold and calculating detention of dissenters who offended them.

**The Analyser:** ...and neither created a society that others would try to emulate.

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