

## **BN's S'wak Report expose - from coup to blunder?**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**July 17, 2015**

**By Nigel Aw**

When Lester Melanyi, a self-professed writer for Sarawak Report confessed that the whistleblower site was fabricating information, it appeared like the trump card for detractors to turn the tables on the UK-based whistleblowing portal.

The allegation fits perfectly into the government's long-standing narrative that Sarawak Report's allegations of misappropriation of 1MDB's funds were based on 'tampered' information and BN was quick to jump on it.

On the night of July 14, even before a police report was lodged over the confession, a media invitation was already out announcing that Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister Abdul Rahman Dahlan would be holding a press conference on Sarawak Report.

The minister personally took charge of the matter and for the first time introduced himself as 'BN strategic communications director', a position uncommon to the ruling coalition and more familiar to the opposition when it comes to making corruption exposes.

The police report was lodged by Ramesh Rao, leader of a pro-BN NGO on July 15 at noon, when he handed a video recording of Lester's (photo) confession as well as an e-mail record of Sarawak Report editor-in-chief Clare Rewcastle-Brown purportedly admitting to forging information.

Within three hours, Abdul Rahman held a press conference at his ministry where he triumphantly declared that he had the evidence implicating Sarawak Report and had handed it over to the police. The video confession was also widely circulated on BN-linked social media pages.

But this 'coup' was shortlived as within 24 hours, Lester publicly admitted that he had been paid to make the confession.

"Yes, some of the comments are true. I am not ashamed to say that I have received money from certain people," he was quoted as saying in an interview with the Malay Mail Online.

### **'If you love Anwar'**

But this was a small setback for BN as Lester still stood by his confession.

However, the problem was in later interviews when Lester's elaboration on the version of events showed further holes in his story.

For example, Lester said he parted ways with Sarawak Report last year as it had 'deviated

from its original purpose' but was somehow approached by Rewcastle-Brown again in January this year to help on 1MDB which allegedly involved fabricating information.

According to Lester, he rebuffed Rewcastle-Brown and in his video confession he says: "I told her I don't want to be part of this scheme even if you love Anwar so much."

So despite parting ways with Sarawak Report twice, Lester startlingly claimed that on July 2 he was asked to read, before it was published, a copy of the whistleblower's portal story alleging RM2.6 billion was deposited into Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's personal bank accounts.

Lester said he again refused to help, saying that it was merely an attempt to help someone in his court case, in reference to former opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, who by that time had already spent five months in jail.

Lester also failed to produce the e-mail in which he claimed Rewcastle-Brown admitted to fabricating information and claims that his e-mail account has now been blocked or hacked.

Rewcastle-Brown has shown the e-mail transcript to Malaysiakini, claiming that it had been edited.

### **Sarawak minister surprised**

She also claimed that Lester had never worked for Sarawak Report and was only hired for a few months for sister organisation Radio Free Sarawak in 2011.

To make things worse for Abdul Rahman's expose, a senior Sarawak BN leader has cast doubt on Lester's allegations.

Senior state minister James Masing, who is PRS president, was quoted by The Malaysian Insider as saying that Lester had credibility issues.

"I'm quite surprised. If Abdul Rahman (photo) had asked me, I would not have advised him to use him (Lester).

"I would tell him not to listen too much and not to pin too much on his (Lester) claims." he was quoted as saying.

However, Abdul Rahman at the prime minister's Hari Raya open house today said he was unclear about Lester's credibility but stressed that people should focus on 'the message instead of the messenger,' again, a line that has been used by the opposition.