

COMMENT | Deeply disgusted by dictator's daughter's drivel

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COMMENT | All week long I've been trying to keep cool as excerpts from Dr Mahathir Mohamad's daughter's book have been printed on this site.

But I could no longer hold my peace when reading the latest tripe in the form of – “Sheraton Move: The day Dr M resigned himself to betrayals”.

That appears to me to be another attempt by the Mahathir camp to rewrite history as if he was not at the heart of the machinations that brought down his own Pakatan Harapan federal government.

Maybe that's why some people are still confused – because having been under one-party rule for so long, we are not a country that understands the finer points of political manoeuvres.

Mahathir wanted to bring down a Mahathir-led Harapan government under

which he was obligated to hand over power to Anwar Ibrahim and replace it with a Mahathir-led unity government that would allow him a free hand to serve a full five-year term without being tied to the promise of reforms and transition.

That's called an attempted self-coup.

A self-coup is a move in which a nation's leader, having come to power through legal means, dissolves or renders powerless the national legislature and assumes extraordinary powers not granted under normal circumstances.

In the words of political scientist Wong Chin Huat – Dr M was trying to give himself presidential powers until his dying day. He failed.

His daughter of course is singing a different song.

Mahathir's many wrongs

“Why are you doing this to Dad?” she squeaks at one point in her book *The Apple and the Tree*.

Mind you, in an earlier excerpt, this tone-deaf narrative was trying to elicit sympathy for the fellow's heart troubles in the late 1980s after he jailed

opponents, shut down papers and crippled the judiciary.

Poor chap had work-related stress from oppressing the country, it seems. Tragic really – I can hear the violins in the background.

Anyway, to me, and to many Malaysiakini readers, Mahathir was a dictator the first time around and a traitor the second time.

This is no victim - he cultivated some PKR leaders and brushed aside others, he invited Umno MPs to defect to his own Bersatu party and bolster its numbers, he steadfastly refused to name a handover date, and he ignored and eventually mocked Harapan's election promises.

Under him, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) delayed naming Harapan senators and thus giving that privilege to a post-Harapan government. He also bypassed the coalition in selecting his own candidate for MACC chief and ended the government's tenure by unilaterally resigning.

More than anything else, his smarmy face at the repulsive Malay Dignity Congress reminded me how he unapologetically called us Indians 'keling' and had not changed one iota.

He was still the man whose first 22-year term in power saw the mushrooming of corruption, the curtailing of freedoms and the widening of the racial divide.

It was no surprise to me when the Sheraton Move unfolded and I actually wrote that this was coming a full year before it did.

The only thing that made it different was Mahathir disagreed at the last minute with the conspirators and they had gone with plan B, cursing us with a bungling Malay-Muslim-dominated government.

Suddenly on the losing end, the new plan was to distance the former prime minister from the abominable crime he had just committed.

Clearing the Mahathir name

The false narrative is there for the benefit of selected sycophants, loyal cronies, and those Harapan leaders and supporters who had some good reasons to be suspicious of Anwar and then foolishly fell into the trap laid by Mahathir.

Some in the latter group helped destroy the best chance we have had for real reform and don't want to admit to themselves that they were led by the nose and helped the ketuanan brigade return to power.

Mahathir and his friends have always been conscious of trying to control the narrative – there was even this "M for Malaysia" movie made by the clan which was so centred around his role in regime change that many mistakenly called it M for Mahathir.

And not content with one book on the shelves, there's another round coming soon with a book called 'Capturing Hope: The Struggle Continues for a New Malaysia'.

The title itself is the height of hypocrisy, considering the individual concerned was most responsible for the failings of old Malaysia and helped scupper the chances of a new one.

I would venture to suggest that if his propagandist offspring was really such a great activist, they should lobby for the unexplained wealth order (such as that introduced in the UK) to investigate the super-rich and force them to help the country's poor recover from the ravages of Covid-19.

Some friends berated me over why Malaysiakini is giving so much prominence to this drivel. Well, I clearly don't like it but I am a believer in free speech (as long as it's not hate speech) and I think it's actually good that the same news website is giving you opposing viewpoints.

Some others, personally sympathetic to Mahathir's family, think it's too much to still be angry. Well, one of the greatest ambitions of my life is to live in a Malaysia without racial politics and corruption, a Malaysia I don't have to encourage my children to migrate away from.

Like many others, I can never forgive the individual whose greed for power destroyed such a great chance. As long as Malaysians like me are around, you will not get to peddle your false narrative unchallenged.

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