

'Toothless tiger' Suhakam turns malicious
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I refer to the Malaysiakini
MCPX
report Suhakam: Uthaya wasn't denied treatment.

The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) - as a supposed independent vanguard of human rights in Malaysia - should be the first to come into the defence of victims of abuse, in this case P Uthayakumar, or at least take the initiative to ensure the truth is unveiled through an appropriate and accurate probe that includes both sides being heard. After all wasn't Uthayakumar the very person in the centre of the issue? Wasn't it he who made the complaints?

If a one-sided probe is sufficient, than from my very own probe, it seems Suhakam deliberately refrained from interviewing Uthayakumar. Had they done so, they may well have had to throw accusations at the prison officials and police officers. We know from past history this is something Suhakam abstains from doing. Perhaps that's why time after time it has earned itself the name of 'toothless tiger'. If this is the manner in which Suhakam conducted its previous inquiries into other human rights issues than, I fear for the preservation of 'truth'.

Suhakam has decided, or perhaps been coached, to portray P Uthayakumar as a liar. Are they now saying that his sugar level did not rise to three times the normal level and that he had not been admitted to the hospital because of this, that from the blood test at the hospital urea, protein and cholesterol levels were above the limit and this condition had led to some blurring of his eyesight, that in fact there is fear there may be damage to his heart.

Isn't it true that Uthayakumar is scheduled for a test to check his heart condition because of suspicion of some damage? Aren't all of these symptoms a diabetic would suffer if medication was not taken, in this case medication denied. Is Suhakam saying that none of these things happened?

What prove does Suhakam have that he Uthayakumar only received salt and sugar-free food and drinks? Can rice and food which are constantly sweet in nature be construed as a 'diabetic diet? Is mere assurance by the party, that would otherwise be guilty, sufficient? Uthayakumar has repeatedly conveyed his problems of not obtaining a diabetic diet and medication to his family and lawyers. He made similar complaints for his friend R Kenghadharan who is a vegetarian. In fact it was claimed by his lawyer that on a recent visit and upon requesting for hot drinks (with no sugar) for both of them, she had been shocked to find that the drinks came extremely and unnecessarily sweet that they had to put it away.

Uthayakumar has been consistent with his claims. How can Suhakam carelessly or maliciously doubt the victim and not the perpetrator? As to his medication, it is my contention that Suhakam has misled and twisted the issue. The statement that Uthayakumar had 'expressed satisfaction' with the medication he received was made while he was admitted at the Taiping Hospital and receiving treatment there. He was only referring to the treatment at the Taiping Hospital. Being a well established hospital with dedicated and meticulous doctors, they would certainly uphold the need for medical treatment. At all times

Uthayakumar was referring to not having been given medication at the Kamunting prison.

Uthayakumar's contention was that for one month he was not given his diabetic medication by the prison officials despite his six official written requests to see the director of the prison. The prison authorities can claim or even demonstrate to Suhakam the ample stock of diabetic medication in their possession but that does not mean nor prove that they had given him those medicines.

Medication was brought by his family only because he had not received the same from the prison. He was beginning to feel very weak and tired. Despite this, he exercised daily in a desperate hope that his sugar level would be lowered. If not for the exercise, his sugar level could have been at a most dangerous level. Knowing that the consumption of non-diabetic meals and no medication was going to make him very ill, he requested for medication to be brought by his family.

It was not to substantiate the medicine supplied by the prison but rather it was the only medication that he could have had. What is the motive behind refusing Uthayakumar his medication?

Suhakam's has further ridiculed itself by claiming 'medical confidentiality' and media reports being sufficient to highlight Uthayakumar's plight. Did Suhakam also run a similar fact-finding probe on others who claimed medical neglect, namely of a detainee by the name of Sanjay Kumar? Please, do let us know the outcome.

As to the fact that Uthayakumar's family did not approach Suhakam – can you really blame them? Can you really blame the people on how they feel about Suhakam?

Aliran's P Ramakrishnan once said: 'Accordingly, I had always thought that a fundamental assessment of Suhakam's role and work must determine whether Suhakam is a creature of the BN government, or an ally of the national movement for justice, whether, in other words, Suhakam sides with those who abuse human rights and violate civil liberties or gives true assistance and solidarity to the victims of the same abuses and violations'.

Uthayakumar is merely fighting - and may die- for his rights under Article 5 (1) of the Federal Constitution ie, his right to life which includes right to proper medical attention.

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