

Set up RCI into Memali incident while Dr Mahathir, Musa still alive, says Kit Siang
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By Sheridan Mahavera

While former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his former deputy, Tun Musa Hitam, are alive, Putrajaya must set up a Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) to investigate the Memali tragedy, says DAP today.

DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang said Musa had "laid bare one of the nation's longest-kept secrets" when he disclosed last Thursday that Dr Mahathir was in Kuala Lumpur during the tragedy in 1985.

"Musa's revelation at a public discussion organised by Kelantan government held in Kota Baru came as a shocker, as for close to three decades, it has been reported and believed that Musa took charge of the operations as home minister because Dr Mahathir was in China for a visit," Lim said in a statement today.

The incident saw 18 people killed in Baling, Kedah, 29 years ago when 400 policemen raided the village to detain religious and political leader Ibrahim Mahmud (Ibrahim Libya), who had been accused of spreading deviant teachings.

Ibrahim refused to surrender to the police, who were there to detain him under the Internal Security Act (ISA), leading to the killings.

The Memali incident has resurfaced following Musa's revelations that Dr Mahathir was in Kuala Lumpur, not China, on November 19, 1985, when the incident happened.

Musa had also said that Dr Mahathir was still in Kuala Lumpur "two or three days" after the incident.

However, Dr Mahathir has yet to deny or confirm Musa's revelation. He reportedly said yesterday he had to study the matter and check if what Musa said was true, as the incident happened a long time ago.

"It is just incredulous and completely unbelievable that a person credited with an elephantine memory could not remember such an important detail," Lim said.

He said Dr Mahathir had absolved himself of the deaths for 29 years but if Musa was right, it meant that the former had masterminded the Memali attacks and even overruled Musa's earlier directive to the police not to use force when arresting Ibrahim Libya and to withdraw should they encounter resistance.

He said an RCI into the incident was warranted because the players were still alive.

Other protagonists, who could shed light on the Memali tragedy, Lim said, included the former inspector-general of police Tun Hanif Omar, former acting inspector-general of police Tan Sri Mohd Amin Osman, then information minister Tan Sri Dr Rais Yatim, former deputy home minister Tan Sri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad, then Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Sanusi Junid, the Baling district police chief during the incident, Tunku Muszaffar Shah, and a follower of Ibrahim Libya who is now a senator, Muhamad Yusof Husin from Baling.

Lim said he made the call for an independent commission of inquiry into the Memali tragedy more than 29 years ago on the grounds that the incident was neither a religious, racial or political problem, but a Malaysian problem which must be dealt with on a non-partisan basis.

He said the inquiry must look into whether there was other way for the police to handle the situation without causing the loss of 18 lives; why women and children were worked up into a frenzy to support Ibrahim; and whether Umno's discriminatory policies against PAS supporters could have been a contributing factor.

Lim said there was a need for an independent and unbiased report on the course of events in the tragedy and make recommendations to prevent a recurrence of such an incident.

With Parliament in session for another two weeks before reconvening in June, Lim urged MPs from both Barisan Nasional and Pakatan Rakyat to unite and support the setting up of a RCI to establish the true circumstances leading to the tragedy and the lessons to be drawn by all concerned to avoid any repetition of such a tragedy.

The veteran DAP parliamentary opposition leader also described the Memali incident – together with two other incidents – must rank as Dr Mahathir's three “blackest and darkest” episodes in his 22-year prime ministership.

He said the second “blackest and darkest” episode was the infamous Operation Lalang in 1987, which saw 108 people detained under the ISA, the draconian detention-without-trial law that allowed Dr Mahathir to consolidate his political control and power in government, Umno and Barisan Nasional.

"Strangely enough, in an exclusive interview with Nanyang Siang Pao last month, Dr Mahathir denied responsibility for Operation Lalang and made the preposterous claim that he was in China at the time and the home minister was one 'Musa'."

Lim said he had pointed out that Dr Mahathir was in the country at the time and he was again guilty of “selective amnesia”.

"He was definitely the home minister at the time. Musa was home minister from 1981 until 1986, until he broke ranks with Dr Mahathir resigning as deputy prime minister and home minister."

Lim said Dr Mahathir's “selective amnesia” was also on display in his third “blackest and darkest” episode when he allegedly ruined the professionalism, independence, impartiality and integrity of the judiciary.

He said the country's longest-serving prime minister brought the first judicial crisis in Malaysia with his "arbitrary and unconstitutional sacking" of the then Lord President, Tun Salleh Abas and two Supreme Court judges, Tan Sri Wan Suleiman Pawanteh and Datuk George Seah in 1998.

"Malaysians will never forget the sorry spectacle of the former prime minister virtually pleading 'selective amnesia' when he appeared before the RCI into the Lingam video tape scandal in January 2008.

"He had to say 'I cannot remember' or its equivalent 14 times during his 90-minute testimony about incidents related to the fixing of judicial appointments," Lim said. – March 30, 2014

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