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Hairi, I.A., Jamil, S.N.M.

Reconstructing #NotMyPM from the #backdoorgovernment: a social actor analysis of Muhyiddin Yassin

Department of English Language and Literature, Abdulhamid Abusulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract
In March 2020, Muhyiddin Yassin assumed power following Mahathir Mohamad's resignation. However, his rise to office triggered significant backlash, with the hashtag "NotMyPM" trending on Twitter, reflecting widespread public discontent. This sentiment was rooted in the perception that his ascendancy contravened the people's mandate and the democratic values upheld in Malaysia, resulting in his government being dubbed the 'backdoor government.' Amid the dual challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and a pivotal moment for democracy, this paper contends that a strategically constructed portrayal of Muhyiddin Yassin possesses the capacity to sway public sentiment directly or indirectly, thereby reshaping negative perceptions of his government. Drawing on van Leeuwen's socio-semantic Social Actor Representation (SAR) framework, we analyze the strategies employed by the local news sites in their portrayal of Muhyiddin Yassin when reporting his first speech as prime minister on the second Economic Stimulus Package (ESP) in March 2020. The findings unveil a consistent utilization of distinct linguistic features and strategies across various online news platforms, effectively contributing to the cultivation of Muhyiddin Yassin's image as a responsible and trustworthy leader. © 2023 Asian Media Information and Communication Centre.

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Correspondence Address
Jamil S.N.M.; Department of English Language and Literature, Malaysia; email: nadillajamil@iium.edu.my