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No need to show rivalry openly

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I WAS told of a mee rebus stall in Taman Melawati in Ulu Klang by Syed Jamil, an old friend who loves food.

Syed claims that this stall serves the best mee rebus in the country, a point which I have yet to verify.

Syed's been going to this stall for the last 10 years, which speaks volume for his loyalty to the stall if not the quality of the food.

He said many people know of the quality of the mee rebus sold there.

It's run by a mamak husband and wife team who hail from Penang.

And since Syed himself is from Kedah, I can imagine why he is so taken up by the food.

Penang folk claim to make the best mee rebus and popiah. Of course no one can dispute that the best nasi kandar comes from the island.

My own favourite is one that's called Line Clear, located on one of the sidelanes near the famous Chowrasta market.

There are quite a number of nasi kandar stalls in Kuala Lumpur, but none can beat those from Penang.

Syed told me of this interesting story which he observed at the mee rebus stall recently.

As usual he was enjoying his meal with a hot glass of Nescafe tarik.

He was into his second glass when he saw a familiar figure who sat a few tables from him.

The manner the stall owner served this customer suggested that he was also another loyal patron.

The mee rebus arrived just after he sat down. The man and the stall operator chatted amiably for a while.

Putting the ever-present handphone on the table, the man proceeded to concentrate on the matter at hand.

After the meal, the man picked up his handphone, stabbed a few numbers, said ok, and ordered a few take-away packets.

The stall owner duly complied. Having paid the bill, the man walked to his car and was out of sight within seconds.

Syed was doing all the observation in between sips of his favourite drink. He called the stall owner over and asked him if he knew who he had just served.

The man's reply was simple and straightforward: "I know him like I know you-lah.

"Sepuluh tahun sini mee rebus makan, saya tau-lah (Of course I know who he is ... he's been eating my mee rebus for the last 10 years)."

But he couldn't tell Syed the man's name. It's quite common to see stall operators selling good food serving VIPs day in, day out and yet they know little of the people they are serving.

Their main concern is to sell good food - who buys them, who eats them doesn't really matter.

In this case, the VIP was the Governor of the Central Bank, Tan Sri Ali Abul Hassan.

It seems that he bought extra mee rebus to take to his office where his staff were having some meetings.

It was quite thoughtful of him, Syed said, adding that most often bosses would get one of the office boys to do all those chores.

This was quite different from another scene which Syed related to me.

It happened overseas quite recently and involved a senior member of the

Cabinet.

Remarks made by the Minister were heard by many newsmen who thought that they were unnecessary and quite in bad taste.

It seems that the episode happened when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was giving a Press conference at the end of a regional conference in Hanoi, Vietnam.

The Minister had to sit elsewhere because the two chairs were taken by the PM and another senior Minister.

When the Press conference was over, the Minister took to task protocol officers in a tone that reflected much anger and frustration.

Some media friends told me there was a trace of jealousy as well.

Rivalries and competition between friends and colleagues are not uncommon and in some instances help to bring out the best workwise.

But I agree with Syed that a person of such high standing should not display such feelings openly.

Whether it was an oversight on the part of the protocol officers or not is another matter, but a Minister spitting out words of reprimand against an officer in public may not yield the desired result.

And what's worse, the whole episode took place abroad.

Perhaps the Minister should join the Bank Negara Governor for mee rebus at Taman Melawati ...

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