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Patten ignorant of facts in Anwar's case

Hairu Hamat

SOMEBODY must wake Chris Patten up from his dream as Britain no longer rules the waves. He must realise that Englishmen are no longer the colonial masters and that its colonies, including Malaysia, are now sovereign nations.

It must have shattered Patten's heart to be the last Englishman to hand over a colony to its rightful owner. Perhaps, too, he has not recovered from the trauma of having to hand over Hong Kong to China. He may still harbour the desire to see the West re-colonising the East once again.

This is what I gather when reading his article, "We must defend the Finance Minister with a black eye" which was published in the Independent on Sunday (Oct 11).

Hence, ignoring the British tradition of fair play, Patten decided to champion former Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim who is facing charges of corruption and sodomy, hoping he can arouse the Western leaders to side with him.

Patten was quick to assume that the charges laid against Anwar were trumped up. That he could make such an assumption only reflects the possibility that such practices may be common in his country. The normal reaction would be to wait for the evidence to be produced in court and for the judge to pass judgment.

Patten may not know this, but the Government of Malaysia ordered a thorough investigation into the alleged beating-up of Anwar while under detention. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was reported in the media as saying that a thorough investigation would be carried out and if there was evidence those responsible would be charged in an open court.

But, to paint a picture of Anwar "beaten to a pulp" sounded like a British joke. Perhaps, Patten should see those pictures of Anwar taken recently.

It is also funny that Patten claimed Anwar's wife has been terrorised. It is funny for someone who Patten claimed was terrorised to still go shopping with her daughter. Anwar's wife was quoted by a foreign wire services as having said she was going shopping with her daughter at Malaysia's major shopping complex recently when she came across a group of Anwar's supporters demonstrating for his release.

The "terrorised" wife was seen shaking hands with her husband's supporters along a busy road in Kuala Lumpur.

Patten also wrote in the article that Anwar said the right things, he did the right thing too. For his information, Anwar told CNBC, a TV station, that he had conducted two DNA tests to prove that he did not father any illegitimate child. It turned out to be a lie because he later admitted he had not had the test.

It is indeed amusing that Patten thinks Anwar has been for years the deserved darling of the international financial community. I cannot share Patten's view on this because as a Malaysian, I find his financial policies shocking, especially when the economy contracted by 6.8 per cent in the second quarter of this year. Before Anwar became the Finance Minister, the ringgit was RM2.52 to one US dollar. Under his tenure it was RM3.80 and had even gone down to RM4.88.

Also, during his term, Bank Negara lost RM30 billion dabbling in the foreign exchange market and another RM10.4 billion in defending the ringgit. The Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange saw RM600 billion being wiped out

and the interest rates were pushed up to 24 per cent causing severe liquidity crunch and crippling industries. Incidentally, Malaysia's per capita income also contracted from US\$5,000 to US2,000, a loss of US\$60 billion. The non-performing loans stood at RM25 billion and the banks now need RM16 billion for recapitalisation. Maybe, Patten would like to invite Anwar to be his financial adviser?

Patten must have been hoodwinked into believing that Anwar is actually fighting corruption and nepotism. At the last Umno general assembly, it was revealed that his own father and family members were beneficiaries of shares allocated by the Government to Bumiputeras. His friends were awarded Government privatised projects.

Patten must have forgotten or the news was not conveyed to him about Anwar's arrest when Queen Elizabeth was visiting the country, and to close the 16th Commonwealth Games. His arrest had nothing to do with the charges laid against him, but was related to inciting his supporters to riot. He timed the demonstration to get the maximum international coverage. The Queen was praying in a church next to an open space where he incited his supporters to riot. This was to enable the cameras accompanying the Queen to switch to him.

Having successfully achieved his objective there, Anwar then left for home where he video-taped a message meant for his children that he was going to be arrested under the Internal Security Act. For Patten's information, his children were sitting before him when the message was taped. The message was, of course, delivered to a foreign TV station where it was broadcast.

If this is the man Patten wants the Western leaders to defend, we Malaysians would like to say good luck. A man who places his personal interest above that of his own people has no place in Malaysia.