

Keadilan's most formidable 'weapons'

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THE Malay phrase *senjata makan tuan* (weapon turning against the owner) may have a bitter lesson for Parti Keadilan National leaders.

The recent attacks launched by the *pro-reformasi* webmasters on deputy president Dr Chandra Muzaffar and secretary-general Mohd Anuar Tahir, raise some questions: who indeed controls the alternative media *senjata* and who now can lay claim to be the *tuans* in Keadilan?

For some time now, leading *pro-reformasi* websites such as *Laman Pertama Mahazalim*, *Laman Reformasi Mahazalim Two*, *Komentar*, *Mahafiraun* and *Black 14* had been the unofficial media bastions for Keadilan supporters.

Last week, these websites closed their access and called for a period of *tafakur* (reflection). Until the *tafakur* ended on May 30, visitors were greeted with black screens *carying* banners, "Seeking Justice in Keadilan" and "Seeking Reformation in Keadilan".

More strident were calls for the resignation of both Anuar and Chandra, who are blamed for the party's malaise and deviation from its original ideals.

Anuar reacted by dismissing his cyber critics and labelling them as "outsiders", saying the party takes no orders from those on the outside.

This line of thought does not give due acknowledgement to the webmasters who

played such an important role in the development of Keadilan, from the early days of rousing support for the Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim issue right up to the last general election, when they greatly helped in promoting the Opposition cause.

Now, the trusted media weapon has turned against Keadilan's leaders who until today had benefited from the public support which these websites successfully canvassed. A webmaster for *Mahazalim Two*, going by the *nome-de-plume* "Temenggung", accused Anuar and Chandra of deviating from the original objectives of Anwar and pledged to fight against the "cheap politicking" happening in the party.

On a lighter note, Bentara Radikal, who is the webmaster for *Komentar*, compared *Harakah* cartoonist Zunar's comments and Anuar's statement saying: "The statement by Zunar the cartoonist was worthy of that of a secretary-general's, while Anuar's statement was more like that of a cartoon character."

Zunar said that while the webmasters may be right, their action was badly timed, with the Teluk Kemang by-election close at hand. Anuar, however, merely blasted away at them and accused the webmasters of being hostile forces planted by the enemy.

The ceaseless website onslaught has prompted Keadilan president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail to issue a brief

News analysis

By Rosihan Zain

statement to the mainstream media. Without addressing the core issue, she chose to blame the Press for publicising the matter.

The truth that no Keadilan official wants to admit openly is that the websites are real, discontented voices from within the party itself.

The clandestine ring of webmasters, far from being outsiders, is actually made up of members and playmakers within Keadilan.

Unfortunately for Anuar and Chandra, it is a circle over which they have no control.

It is known that the party is split along several lines, with major camps being the former *Abim* followers and former *Umno* members scrambling for influence in the party. The question is, to whom, apart from Anwar, are the webmasters aligned?

Chandra, in a recent statement, de-

turn on senior party leaders

fended his and Anuar's role and said he was "opposed to politics of deception (by those) who **camouflage** the real motives behind noble intentions and lofty aspirations".

Unlike Anuar who tried to give the impression of the webmasters being outsiders, Chandra was more direct in his offensive on the individuals whom he accused of using the **websites** for their own political leverage.

This, however, is not the first time Chandra's position has been questioned. **Rumours** had begun circulating months before that members were unhappy with his supposed resistance to the proposed merger of Keadilan and **Parti Rakyat Malaysia**, a union said to be endorsed by Anwar himself.

Chandra strongly denied **rumours** of attempts to overthrow him, and when asked by the *New Straits Times* to comment said, "I wouldn't entertain **rumours** and I hope the media doesn't either." That was only a few months ago.

Both Chandra and Anuar, often linked to the former Abim faction, are facing tough times, especially with the recent defection of several Youth leaders threatening to destabilise the party.

According to a party insider, there is much talk of more members wanting to desert the party, and some "announcements might be expected soon" especially

from Kuala Lumpur and Terengganu.

Also affecting the party is the moral attack against Keadilan Youth chief Mohd **Ezam Mohd Noor**, a thrust aimed straight at the jugular, for he is at the forefront of the movement perceived to be the backbone of this young party. Then, there is the added pressure of the Teluk Kemang by-election on June 10. Already the choice of Keadilan information chief Ruslan Kassim as the Opposition candidate is unpopular with the Indian supporters of the Opposition, for the seat has always been traditionally reserved for Indian candidates.

The choice of Ruslan was calculated to grab the votes of the Malay majority in the area, but many have accused the party of being communal.

The by-election, thus, **may** have a **sig-**nificant impact on the standings of both Anuar and Chandra, a test of sorts of their leadership and credibility.

In ancient times, Malay warriors used to regularly perform rituals on their crises, when the daggers were smoked with incense and bathed in lime.

Legends also speak of powerful, magical crises that demanded terrible forms of sacrifice, lest the unappeased spirits inside revolt and attack the owner.

There are now voices of revolt inside Keadilan. The final appeasement **may** somehow emerge from the political waters of Teluk Kemang, one way or the other.