

24/06/2000

Battles taken up by Dr M against detractors are for all Malaysians

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WHEN Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said in Egypt recently that he was going to fight tooth and nail to any attempt to jeopardise the prosperity of the country, it is not something to be taken lightly.

After all, it came from a man who, during the height of the economic crisis two years ago, decided to go against conventional practice and introduced selective capital controls and the pegging of the ringgit.

Described as a heretic and a person who knows next to nothing about economics, Dr Mahathir and Malaysia had emerged from the crisis almost returning to the pre-crisis situation.

The Times of India, in its June 15 edition, carried an article, among others, praising Dr Mahathir for his courage, which, in defying conventional wisdom of international financial community, had managed to turn Malaysia's economy around in record time.

The writer in conclusion stated:

"Maybe it is time to look at the economic ideas of Mahathir."

It must be satisfying for the Prime Minister who, when the economic disaster hit Malaysia, was laughed and scorned at by the international community when he blamed rogue speculators as the cause of Malaysia's financial woes.

On reflection, many quarters in Malaysia cringed whenever he decided to go on the international platform to criticise the foreign fund managers who dabbled in speculation.

At the time, quite a number of the so-called more educated Malaysians in their discussions, from the warungs to the elite restaurants, condescendingly said that every time Dr Mahathir opened his mouth, the ringgit and the composite index of the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange dropped.

In fact, today, some of the foreign "experts", whose quotes were liberally sprinkled all over the place by local detractors of Dr Mahathir, had changed their tune.

Yet, it is difficult for the locals to openly shift their stand.

It is actually quite funny because these locals were more than eager to echo the chorus of the foreign detractors.

They will probably find the new chorus line to endorse Dr Mahathir's wisdom in pursuing the unconventional economic measures when all their foreign idols repeatedly said so.

In essence, it is actually very difficult to openly praise Dr Mahathir for what he had done right.

If one chooses to do so, chances are, he or she may end up being labelled a Mahathir's apologist.

Worst still, is the possibility of being derided as a sycophant of Mahathir.

Weirder still is the fact that most of Dr Mahathir's detractors included those who were more than eager to praise foreign leaders, especially those who stood up against Western powers pursuing neo-colonialism.

During the Gulf War, some even named their shops after Saddam Hussein without regards to whether his action of launching the attack on Kuwait was right or otherwise.

The support was very simple, because he was opposing a country being supported by the Americans.

Similarly with the appreciation for Libyan's Muammar Gaddafi. Regards

are high for him as the Americans consider him their enemy.

The list goes on and on and in fact, during the early stages when Malaya was pursuing independence and immediately after, names like Egyptian's Gamal Nasser and Indonesia's Soekarno were held with much esteem regardless of their standing within their own countries.

Even in contemporary issues like those involving Osama bin Laden, many a Malay is sympathetic and some even idolising him, merely for opposing the "American" imperialism.

But locally, many of these Malays are agreeable to the criticisms and attacks levelled by the Americans and the West towards Dr Mahathir.

A senior editor used to quote:

"A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country and in his own house."

This probably best describes such a circumstance.

But such a saying should probably be used sparingly when discussing Dr Mahathir lest the detractors may decide that it is an effort to equate him to a prophet.

Oh yes, he has once again "opened his mouth".

When he said fighting tooth and nail in Egypt, he was referring to foreign capitalists promoting globalisation and unbridled capitalism.

These thoughts are probably alien to some while to others, Dr Mahathir is yet again trying to fight another invisible enemy.

"Striking the shadow again," a detractor said sarcastically.

Come to think of it, if such cynicism did not come along whenever Dr Mahathir speaks of an idea, then deafening silence is clearly being defined.

The questions that remained unanswered is whether the lack of support for Dr Mahathir's battles are due to the battles he chose to fight or because it was him who chose to start them.

Looking at the way Malaysian society had evolved politically, it can be concluded that such reactions have a lot to do with the fact that the battles are being taken up by Dr Mahathir.

Sad as it may sound, that is the reality.

But this battle needs to be fought and Malaysians must remember that the battle is for all.

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