

06/06/2000

Treacherous remarks by `envoys`

Kamal A. Ghazi

IT has been a trend for several "reformists" and "Anwaristas" to jet set abroad and air their grievances to select foreign audiences.

They are invited to speak to academics, journalists and even foreign policy makers about current political developments in Malaysia.

Often they are welcomed with open arms, especially by those foreigners who regard them as the torchbearers of liberal democracy in Malaysia.

Their comments are highlighted in foreign newspapers and magazines. Their thoughts and opinions are portrayed as representing the voice of the Malaysian people.

Their interpretation of political developments in Malaysia is hardly scrutinised by the foreign press or by academics of international repute.

To them, these "ambassadors" from Malaysia speak the truth and it is the Malaysian Government that is spinning a web of deceit and chicanery to cover up its sins.

These "goodwill" visits have elicited unwanted and ill-thought comments from foreign leaders. Philippines President Joseph Estrada and Amien Rais, chairman of Indonesia's People's Consultative Assembly have taken cheap shots with off-the-cuff statements intended to appease the visiting "Anwarista" delegation - usually led by Nurul Izzah, daughter of former Deputy Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Much of what is conveyed by Malaysia's self-appointed "spokespeople" are of the "we want freedom", "we want Anwar out of jail", and "we want democracy" variety.

While these sort of comments irresponsibly cast aspersions on our country, most Malaysians have viewed them as desperate measures by a small minority who go abroad to make and prompt a damaging sound bite for the latest CNBC news cycle.

A recent visit by a Malaysian delegation to Thailand, however, raises grave concerns about these parallel diplomatic channels that are being cultivated by the political opposition.

The Nation, a leading English daily in Thailand, carried an article on May 24 about a dialogue session held by the Malaysian delegation and a group of academics and pressmen.

The article focused on comments made by Nurul Izzah. Her statements were the usual staple of oft-repeated reformasi-talk.

The remarks that are of great concern to Malaysians are those made by Elizabeth Wong, described in the article as "a leading human rights campaigner".

First, she chastises Thailand for remaining silent on the Anwar issue, and blames this on the Asean policy of non-interference which she wants done away with.

But it is her following quote that must be highlighted and pondered upon by all Malaysians.

To do justice to the article and the quote it is reprinted in verbatim as follows:

She (Elizabeth Wong) said Malaysia was slowly becoming a police state, adding "we've got a little Hitler in the making", in reference to Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

A little Hitler in the making? How can any fair-minded Malaysian accept such a rude, callous and obtuse statement? Dr Mahathir has been called many things. In the Internet web pages he is mahazalim, mahafiraun, etc.

But at least these things have been said on the trash sheets of the Internet - most with very little credibility.

Elizabeth Wong took it upon herself to deliberately and maliciously insult Dr Mahathir by comparing him with one of the most evil men in human history in a widely read Thai mainstream newspaper and to a captive foreign audience.

Elizabeth Wong took advantage of the international platform that she was given to make an unfounded comparison.

How could she in her right mind compare Dr Mahathir with a monster who exterminated millions of people in concentration camp gas chambers? How can she in her right mind compare Dr Mahathir with a racist and supremacist dictator who believed in the superiority of the Aryan race?

How can she in her right mind compare Dr Mahathir with a war-waging extremist who invaded neighbouring countries and started a world war? How can she in her right mind compare Dr Mahathir with a thug who used storm troopers to kill political enemies and burn down the Reichstag (German Parliament) to consolidate power?

How can she in her right mind compare Dr Mahathir with someone whose name has become synonymous with evil?

Such an unfair, hurtful and treacherous remark must not be left unpunished. But let the punishment be the collective voice of fair-minded Malaysians pouring scorn on the comment and on the person who said it. For far too long the silent majority has remained silent. For far too long we have allowed these disloyal Malaysians to smear our country in the eyes of the world.

We know that Dr Mahathir will not respond to Elizabeth Wong's cruel and nasty remark. As Prime Minister, he is above it - and rightly so. Instead, let us speak for him, and let us speak for our country.