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Don't base things on a one-issue assessment, consider grey areas too

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AT a talk with Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) undergraduates, one of the students raised a question about a book written by Khalid Jafri on former Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin.

The question, among others, attempted to find out whether there was any truth in the allegations made by the writer against Daim.

The interest in the book is not merely because it is about a prominent leader of the country, but also because the writer is the same person who wrote the controversial book 50 Dalil Mengapa Anwar Tidak Boleh Jadi PM or "50 reasons why (former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri) Anwar Ibrahim cannot be Prime Minister".

The undergraduate is not the only one interested in the book on Daim. It seems that the book has been widely distributed and sold, very much like the earlier book on Anwar.

The point of discussion here is not the credibility of the book or its writer, but how the Malay Muslims' minds work.

The reply to the undergraduate's question was not the answer.

"If you believed what the writer wrote about Anwar then you have the right to believe what he wrote about Daim.

"However, if you rejected what he wrote earlier, then there is no reason for you to believe him now."

Of course, it is easier said than done but the principle in evaluating such subjects should be as stated.

The fact, however, remains that many have rejected the earlier book - describing its contents as lies and baseless allegations.

Most came to this conclusion because of their love for the leader.

But today, they believe what was written by the same writer on another leader because of their dislike for that leader.

The bottomline is that such an assessment is not based on the facts presented or the credibility of the writer, rather on the readers' bias - be it perception or personal liking.

However, such a problem is not confined to just the way the Malay Muslims deal with political or politicised books.

Even the acceptance of views from renowned Islamic scholars and ulama can be quite selective.

Take Shaykh Abdalqadir As-Sufi, the visiting Islamic scholar who founded the Worldwide Murabitun (people of the outpost or dwellers of the fortified monastery) Movement, for example.

Noted for his dakwah effort and making Islam a way of life among Muslims worldwide, Abdalqadir is in Malaysia to deliver a talk.

He took the opportunity to meet Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and was full of praise for the Prime Minister.

The scholar told a Press conference that Malaysians, especially the Malay Muslims, should be grateful that a true Muslim and defender of Islam is their Prime Minister.

He further described Dr Mahathir as the only Muslim leader in the world who saw and understood the evils of the secular currency and banking system and courageously stood against them.

Abdalqadir was referring to the way Dr Mahathir dealt with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank during the height of the 1997 Asian currency crisis.

If Abdalqadir thought that "speaking from the heart" would open up the

minds of the Malay Muslims to appreciate what Dr Mahathir had done, then he was wrong.

Negative reactions came almost immediately after the media reported this.

Apart from dismissing his views on Dr Mahathir, Abdalqadir's standing as an Islamic scholar of international repute was also questioned.

Among the arguments put forth was his questionable knowledge of Malaysia - since he is a foreigner.

If that is the justification to reject his views, the same should be done to international organisations such as the Amnesty International and foreign individuals including the likes of former US Vice-President Al Gore when they passed judgment on Malaysia and its leadership.

Aren't they also foreigners? How much do they know about Malaysia for the citizenry or the rest of the world to accept their views on the country?

It is ironic that Malay Muslims who willingly accept the views of other Islamists who condemn Dr Mahathir are not prepared to accept those who praise him.

Let's put it the other way - if they are sceptical of ulama who praise Dr Mahathir, they should be equally sceptical of those who condemn him.

The bottomline is it is not about having to swallow or reject everything presented - the situation many Malay Muslims are facing today - listening to only what they want to hear and looking at only what they want to see.

Then, as a colleague puts it - there is a need to put things on the scale and not make a stand based on a one-issue assessment.

There is no such thing as black and white when it comes to dealing with political issues and the running of the Government.

The grey areas too are of equal, if not greater importance. But, to dwell over such thoughts requires the use of the grey matter.

And that, for some, is such a tough task which can turn their hair grey.