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West perpetuating the image of a bullying sheriff

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WHEN US President George W. Bush decided to appoint Australia as a "sheriff" to help keep the peace in the Asia-Pacific region, strong opposition was voiced by Asian leaders, especially from Malaysia.

In the US, presentday sheriffs are popularly-elected chief law enforcement officers of counties.

It is a legacy of the Wild West and Asians tend to relate it to the images of the past which had been made popular in this part of the world by Hollywood.

The images of American sheriffs that most Malaysians will remember are those of the gun-slinger type, blood-thirsty, undiplomatic and very quick on the draw.

Sheriffs, taken in the presentday British context, are the chief executive officers of the Crown in a county. Their roles are mainly ceremonial.

Most Malaysians will probably remember the Sheriff of Nottingham, notorious as an oppressor of the downtrodden, a traitor to King Richard the Lion Heart and a lackey to the usurping Prince John.

But England was lucky that Robin of Locksley, or more popularly known as Robin Hood, changed the equation of the rich robbing the poor to robbing the rich to give to the poor.

While both the American and English sheriffs have a very dubious past, the Muslim sheriff, or shereef, has a more benign face for it is the title for the governor of Mecca in the past and currently an honorific title accorded to any Muslim ruler.

The title is believed to have an illustrious origin, adopted from the name Sharif, a descendant of Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatima.

But the past remains the past and the present issue of Australia being unilaterally appointed by the US merely perpetuates the perception that the West, (read the Whites), is trying to dominate the world and not being subtle about it at all.

In the first place, Washington should be very much aware that Australia is not accepted as part of Asia.

Secondly, Australia's stand on the invasion of Iraq has further distanced it from Asians and the majority Muslim populace.

Thirdly, why is Australia being made the sheriff and not any other Asian nation? Is it because they are brown or yellow and not white?

Of course, it can be argued that the "real" Asians are not keen to be the sheriff of the US or any other nation. That being the case, why the need to appoint one, Australia or otherwise?

Such arguments may be construed as a racist viewpoint but if not assessed through a blinkered eye, Washington's selection of Australia to "sheriff" the Asia-Pacific region is, in its own right, a racist choice.

But the right to label anyone a racist or otherwise has also become a monopoly of the US and its allies.

Take the case of the speech by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the recently-concluded Organisation of the Islamic Conference Summit in Putrajaya.

Put aside the fact that the part of the speech which touched on the Jews controlling the world through proxies was taken out of context, the discomfort felt by Washington, the Tel Aviv regime and supporters of Zionism had turned into threats.

Even the civil act of Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien shaking hands with Dr Mahathir at the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (Apec) in Bangkok three days ago was condemned by Canadian opposition MPs.

However, no Malaysian leader has been criticised or condemned for shaking hands with Bush despite the anger towards US' acts of aggressions against the Muslim world and his support for the Tel Aviv regime in the killings and murders of Palestinians and the attack on Syria.

Neither has any Asian leader been condemned in their own backyard for shaking hands with Australian Prime Minister John Howard despite his arrogance of wanting to pursue pre-emptive strikes on suspected terrorists hiding in sovereign nations in the region.

No doubt, Canberra had withdrawn such intent but the fact remains, no Asian or Muslim has gone to the extreme of not allowing their leaders to shake hands with the perpetrators of aggression.

But the manner the US and some Western nations had reacted to the remarks by Dr Mahathir on the Jews has only given credence to the perception of the Jews controlling the world.

Even if they don't, they behave as if they do.

Take the case of Wednesday's United Nations General Assembly resolution demanding Israel to stop the construction of security fences and walls in the West Bank.

The US was among the four nations, the others being Israel, Micronesia and Marshall Islands, opposing the resolution.

The reaction from Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert says it all - Tel Aviv would ignore the resolution and would instead pursue the construction.

How does such arrogance breed if not from the sense of being powerful enough to oppose the majority decision in the UN and knowing that the most powerful nation, the US, is going to back it all the way?

All these only prove the fact that since Tel Aviv controls the most powerful nation, it means that it controls the world.

If the most powerful nation is working according to Tel Aviv's aspirations, it also proves that the US is the proxy.

That established, the next aspect is definitely about the double standards.

When non-Muslim leaders, (read the West), made disparaging remarks about Islam and Muslims or for that matter, against China or other Asian nations, they were presented by their media as promoting democracy, equal rights, transparency, or at the very least, the right to the freedom of speech.

However, when Dr Mahathir raised the issue, it was immediately latched on as him being anti-Semitic (note: Semites are not only Jews but also Arabs), promoting hatred which can lead to conflicts.

By any comparison, neither Malaysia nor Dr Mahathir had ever been known to be involved in acts of aggression against any other nations but the very leaders who condemned him of promoting hatred are those whose hands are bloodied, not only by the soldiers in Afghanistan or Iraq, but the children and the innocents.

On that score, the recent report by the Australian television network about former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim being linked to terrorist activities is something which should not be taken as the "gospel truth".

Malaysians should by now be able to put their domestic political stand aside and not lap up the report merely because they disagree or dislike Anwar.

After all, in the past, reports by Australian media which were not to the liking of Malaysians had been denounced and when it served certain

political interest, it should then not be given credibility.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim made a very pertinent point when he said that the report might be a "ploy by certain quarters in the US and those who hate Asia-Pacific to link cases which may not be true".

His call for Malaysian authorities to conduct its own investigation to determine the veracity of the allegations is, to say the least, heartening.

Such reports will only give credence to the need of Australia playing its role as the sheriff in this part of the world.

Howard should be reminded of the popular song by the late Bob Marley and the Wailers - I Shot the Sheriff.

The song tells the story of the shooting of Sheriff John Brown who has been hunting him down and that he "didn't shoot no deputy".

The sheriff is definitely not from Mecca or other parts of the Muslim world.