

Rape admission and domino effect
Malaysiakini.com
January 3, 2011

The minister who is allegedly accused of rape by his former maid is still protected by Umno. The prime minister Najib Abdul Razak sees no reason to refute the allegations or even reassure the nation that investigations are underway. Perhaps he's not worried about public opinion. Perhaps he's not bothered about justice. The damning thing is that for Najib & Co, it is business as usual.

Why are we not surprised? The rape of our own people, the Penan girls (2008) are but a distant memory. Another rape (2005) involving a "senior minister from Kedah" is conveniently forgotten. The rape of a minor (1994) by the Malacca chief minister was whitewashed from history. An opposition politician dared speak out when the grandmother of the minor approached him for help. He was jailed. That is how the establishment deals with those who seek justice.

We are not surprised because we have come to expect this sort of thing from our politicians.

Our policemen behave as if they are a law unto themselves. Like gangsters. Whilst our politicians behave as if they are above the law.

The WikiLeaks revelations about Malaysia stated that the rape by the minister occurred during former Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's tenure. The deputy prime minister then, Najib Abdul Razak, was supposedly aware of the rape allegation.

Abdullah did not order an investigation into this very serious allegation. He was perhaps mindful of national security and Malaysia's reputation.

But worse still, he had to deal with the shock withdrawal of one of his ministers from the race to replace the outgoing Commonwealth secretary-general, Don McKinnon, whose term would have expired in March 2008.

Abdullah Badawi's dilemma

Malaysia fielded a candidate because there had never been an Asian secretary-general. We were guaranteed success and our bid was supported by our neighbours Singapore and Brunei, as well as those from farther afield, like New Zealand.

The Commonwealth secretariat that is based in London received intense lobbying from our High Commission in the United Kingdom. Visiting Commonwealth heads of state were ready to meet our candidate in Malaysia. Our candidate had even planned a visit to London to rally more support.

We would have raised our profile in the eyes of the world, but for the bombshell.

It was very noble of our Commonwealth candidate to devote time and energy to prepare for the 50th Merdeka celebrations. He decided to forego international prestige and glamour, an extremely generous pay package courtesy of the Commonwealth and the other trappings of luxury that befits its secretary-general. Just imagine how many doors he would have

opened with a curriculum vitae like that!

He knew the importance of the 50th anniversary of Merdeka and decided to put aside his personal ambition in favour of his public duty.

It is unsurprising that Abdullah Badawi (above) could not deal with the allegations of rape as he had to deal with the greater crisis of the withdrawal of our prize contender from the Commonwealth race.

Why the silence?

Last month, migrant rights group Tenaganita made public a media statement by Indonesian non-governmental organisation Migrant Care, which repeated its call for a thorough investigation into the allegations of rape.

The statement named the victim as Robengah, and described the culprit as one "Malaysian senior minister" from "the ruling party".

Both Najib (right) and his cabinet have kept curiously quiet about this re-emerging rape allegation. Are they not interested in protecting their reputations? Are they looking over their shoulders?

The longer they wait, the more their reputations are sullied. They are collectively guilty of preventing justice from taking its natural course, or of perverting the course of justice.

Despite their fancy titles and their talk of unity, harmony and doing what is best for the nation, they are cowards. Or perhaps they are waiting for the first to blink.

Perhaps, each has too many skeletons in too many closets and they fear the domino effect. If one minister were to be prosecuted – who might be next?

This is a cabinet that has lost all moral authority. Why is the minister for women community and family development silent? Why is the home minister not initiating an investigation? Perhaps Umno/BN hopes if they wait long enough, this allegation will go away.

I have news for them. It won't.

Rais Yatim's right

We cannot depend on the Indonesian government to help either. Why? The reason is pure money, in the form of remittances of billions of dollars from the millions of girls like Robengah.

Malaysia knows that the Indonesians will be hard pressed to force an investigation, however, as much it might want to protect its citizens. All Malaysia has to do is to threaten to stop the importation of maids. The effect on the Indonesian authority will be like magic.

In the last diplomatic furore stemming from the abuse of maids, was the Malaysian public truly bothered about the gross violations of trust and the stories of abuse? Of course we were not. We are as bad as our cabinet. Dirty dishes and bawling kids means we too look the other way.

Robengah is one poor girl who did not want to tell her story because she feared that she

would not be believed. That is on top of the humiliation and the fear. Well we are hearing her now and we will not let her story rest until justice has been served. Malaysians have turned the other cheek for far too long now.

In that respect, we must observe what our Minister of Information and Communications Rais Yatim said last week, about the bribery allegation involving Alcatel-Lucent.

He has instructed the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission to investigate and said, "It does not speak very well in terms of our international image, so the pursuing act we need is to have more details on how and where (all this occurred); otherwise we would appear to be a whole lump of graft givers."

The man is right. We must do something.

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