

Why Brother Jib can't be trusted
MalaysiaKini.com
January 20, 2012
Josh Hong

Those who follow current affairs religiously must have heard of the famous saying of US Senator Hiram Johnson that 'truth is the first casualty of war'.

Given that war does not occur often - at least not as frequently as feared - one must at times wonder if truth is truly trampled enough.

It is and - more often than not - by the powers-that-be.

This week, we heard again leaders of arguably the world's biggest racist party - Umno that is - preach to the global audience that Malaysia is a bastion of moderation and a bulwark against extremism. Najib Abdul Razak, the apprentice prime minister, vowed to spearhead the 'clarion for moderation', unveiling also an institute of Wasatiyyah (Moderation) under the purview of his own department.

It cannot be more amusing. Despite Malaysia's dismal academic performance, which lags far behind countries in the region, it has not stopped the government from establishing one ostensibly academic institute after another.

The formation of the Institute of Occidental Studies - for one - at the behest of Dr Mahathir Mohamad just before he stepped down in 2003 has failed to raise the standards of our higher education. Downward slide worse than Rwanda

Then in 2005, Abdullah Badawi announced in self-congratulation the founding of the Malaysia Anti-Corruption Academy, which also has proven useless in arresting the country's sliding Corruption Perceptions Index.

As of now, Malaysia stands at 60 out of 182 countries surveyed, down four notches from the previous year and even worse than Rwanda. Yes, RWANDA.

Now that Najib would want to showcase the Institute of Wasatiyyah as a token of his commitment to keeping Malaysia a moderate nation, but there are ample reasons to believe it will only end up what it's meant to be: a token.

I must go back the eventful 1987, when in the month of October the Umno youth leader by the name of Najib Abdul Razak appeared in a stadium in Kampung Baru in Kuala Lumpur, making racist speeches before a jingoistic audience.

A friend of mine who was there to cover the rally was advised by a kind Malay policeman to stay away from the venue because "I tak boleh janji keselamatan kau kalau sesuatu berlaku".

My friend heeded his words and kept a distance, but could still hear the roaring inside the stadium and the repeated warnings for the Chinese not to question Malay rule.

It was the year of living dangerously indeed, culminating in Operasi Lalang for which Mahathir has recently sought to shift his responsibility to the police.

The man making a clarion call for the Malays to rise up against others is now the head of government, but the mainstream press - especially all the major Chinese dailies - now pretends the racially and politically charged gathering did not happen.

Worse, they are racing to heap praises on him instead as if he had gone through a miraculous

transformation.

More terrifying than torture, death

Seeing the subservient and pliable character of the Malaysian media reminds me of what George Orwell wrote in 1984: If the Party could thrust its hand into the past and say of this or that even, it never happened - that, surely, was more terrifying than more torture and death.

But has Najib ever changed? Hardly.

This protégé of Mahathir was born with a silver spoon and has achieved practically nothing significant since his foray into politics nearly four decades ago.

He has made it thus far thanks only to the lucrative handouts and the powerful machinery at Umno's disposal, not least so the media. Oh, we must also not forget Nazir Razak, the Great Helmsman of the increasingly powerful CIMB.

Najib does know he must endow his policies with clarity and purpose, but this is precisely what Umno is incapable of.

Too vague a statement would make him look foolish, while too clear a policy stance would antagonize the hawks within the party who are constantly on a lookout to sabotage him.

NONE So Najib has been deploying propaganda and blending fact and fiction in order to package and sell himself as embodying the moderate voice.

Unfortunately, this man is not made of steel and he flip-flops often, as seen in his now hilarious yes-stadium-no-stadium seesaw before the Bersih 2.0 rally last July and the promulgation of the How-To-Frustrate-Peaceful-Assembly Bill.

And it was not so long ago that, having worked profusely to propagate his 1Malaysia without much success, Najib retreated to the comfort zone and called on the Malays to unite for the sake of survival at the Umno general assembly.

There were 24 years and two months between October 1987 and December 2011, long enough for one to raise a child and properly educate him or her.

If used wisely and prudently, it would also make a medium-size country to become truly democratic and prosperous, such as Taiwan, South Korea and Argentina.

Perhaps a diligent secret agent?

Curiously, Najib chose to dwell on the old text once used years ago, while at the same time hoping to offer something inspiring.

It is either he is indeed a Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, or a secret agent for Pakatan Rakyat to undermine Umno's political hegemony, earning a name in history for himself. I must confess I would be pleased with the latter.

But it is in fact not too daunting a task to test the image that Najib has spent lavishly to create.

In carrying out this essential task, the fundamental questions to ask NONE of Brother Jib are: what is your position on the threats issued against Ambiga Sreenevasan just before the massive rally last year?

Why have you not condemned the minor explosions outside the KL High Court immediately after Anwar Ibrahim was acquitted, leaving it only to your minions MCA and Gerakan?

And how would you regard those thugs who resorted to violence against Safwan Anang, the student activist?

Finally, Brother Jib, would you ensure a peaceful, orderly and constitutional transition of power should Barisan Nasional lose at the next general election?

Any silence on his part would be telling enough to debunk his myth of moderation.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/187186>