

Anwar's sodomy acquittal a Pyrrhic victory

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COMMENT Those who claimed that Anwar Ibrahim's acquittal by the High Court last week on a charge of sodomy was a game-changing move must have felt, after the Attorney-General's Chambers filed a notice of appeal yesterday, rather like North Korea's nuclear disarmament interlocutors in recent years.

anwar ceramah in melaka 040112Just when we discern some sign of softening on the part of the communist world's first dynastic regime, a South Korean frigate is sunk off the coast of the Korean peninsula, or Pyongyang test fires a missile, or commits some such travesty.

Then, what vestigial hopes the North had managed to keep alive in its adversaries are recognised as chimerical before the rogue regime begins another cycle of 'now you see my softer side, now you don't.'

It's a case of the inveterately bad only getting worse while fiendishly engaged in a dance of deception to take advantage of the gullible.

What are we to think?

Those wanting regime-change

Perhaps what the English poet WB Shelley said ("Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world") that makes one of our own, A Samad Said, a seer in our times with the prophecy of his discourse in his most recent offering, 'Merindu Ruang' (A Yen to be Unbound):

Ada sang perubah permainan
kami perubah kekuasaan
Inilah tekad generasi baru
akarnya keadilan syahdu

(Facing purveyors of game-change
Are those wanting regime-change
This is the power of newly emerging forces
Rooted in the sublimity of noble justice)

All good poetry works like this: it teaches humankind their actual desires, the desires that must be accommodated in a truly enduring and beneficent order.

But what of the right of the prosecution in the sodomy and sedition cases to their desires for vindication?

Sure, it is the right of the prosecution, in both the Anwar sodomy and in the Karpal Singh sedition cases, to appeal.

Karpal Singh at Pakatan convention KedahBut the sodomy case had so many holes it would have made the one the reefs bore in the hull of the cruise liner Costa Concordia off the Italian coast the other day look meager by comparison.

As for Karpal's (right) supposedly seditious fulminations in the wake of the changeover in the Perak state government in February 2009, if these were as licentious as what issued from him in some internal DAP disputes of fairly recent vintage, then it's plausible he would be liable.

But Karpal the solicitor is known to be more judicious than Karpal the political jouster.

Business as usual

So just when elements of the punditocracy were beginning to hold forth on the advent of a more liberal order under Prime Minister Najib Razak, there occur two appeals in the judicial process that imply that business, in our justice system, is reverting to status quo ante.

No doubt this will renew attention to the so-called battle in Umno between the hardliners and liberals, with the former viewed as having, in the wake of the appeals in the sodomy and sedition cases, gained the upper hand.

But these nuances aren't worth the trouble it takes to be discerning about them.

It's like the argument over whether the captain of the Costa Concordia abandoned his ship before all passengers had left the stricken liner.

It's a diversion from a graver issue: what was the vessel doing so close to where it was perilous to go?

NONE When the system is a sclerotic as the one Umno-BN has contrived for this country, the bard Samad Said's (left) intimation that you need regime change is not a radical prescription.

Anwar's second trial for sodomy is not the personal problem that the erstwhile Hasan Ali, formerly of PAS, and at times, even Najib, have airily held the matter to be: it is paradigmatic of plenty that is wrong with a regime that has been in power for far too long and displays the unmistakable symptoms of its entrenched and repetitive abuses.

Its bad ways are beyond reform and a leader seeking to change the game is like someone in quest of an oasis in a parched land.

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