

**Life of Najib - why he feeds the tiger**  
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COMMENT Would the unflattering comparison irk Chinese readers? I reflected on this as the idea for the article bobbed about in my head like a lifeboat drifting in the Pacific Ocean.

I blame Yann Martel, the author of the book for this predicament. For it was he, despite the abundance of more dignified predators in the animal kingdom, who chose a hyena.

I nevertheless press ahead but not without first expressing sincere regret to those who might feel slighted by the hyena-Chinese reference.

If you thought director Ang Lee's Oscar winning celluloid adaptation of "Life of Pi" was brilliant, then you should read the book, which I did over the past week. It is, in one word, magnificent.

For those not acquainted with this fantasy tale either in its cinematic or literary manifestations, allow me to recount the plot in brief.

A sixteen-year-old boy is sailing in a cargo ship with his family from India to Canada. On board with them is a host of animals, given that his father owned a zoo. The ship sinks, and the boy finds himself in a lifeboat with an injured zebra, a famished hyena, a 450-pound tiger and a seasick orang utan.

The hyena kills the zebra and orang utan. Later, the tiger butchers the hyena. And the boy spends the next several months on the lifeboat with the tiger.

Najib's lifeboat is BN

As I devoured the pages, I could not help but allow imagination to saunter and entwine the plot in hand with the politics of our land. And so I pictured the prime minister in the role of the protagonist, Piscine Molitor Patel, or Pi for short.

It occurred to me that Pi's shipwreck saga, the version with the animals, bore a striking resemblance to the situation that Najib Abdul Razak finds himself in at this moment.

Though some might contend that it is not a male royal Bengal tiger named Richard Parker that has him sweating but a ferocious tigress, whose name incidentally, also begins with the letter R, who prowls the corridors of Seri Perdana. Rumour has it that it was at her behest that he took up the job in the first place.

Fact or adversaries-conjured horror fables, Najib's domestic woes are of no concern to us.

Given that these are sensitive times, I believe it would be best to convert Richard Parker into a religious extremist for the "Life of Najib" edition. Hence, the tiger shall be known as Ridhuan Tee bin Abdullah.

Ridhuan Tee bin Abdullah represents the conservative Malay/Muslims, the Umno hardliners as well as the likes of Isma. Whereas the hyena - once again with deep apologies - the Chinese.

As for the inconsequential zebra that is eaten alive - that would be the Indians, who lack both political and economical clout and have for decades been represented by politicians who, some would argue, rightly belong in a zoo.

The orang utan, another insignificant character in the storyline which dies soon after the zebra, is perhaps the indigenous population of both East and West Malaysia.

And the lifeboat, the last remnant of a large vessel which has since sunk, that is now floating aimlessly, would be symbolic of the BN ruling coalition.

Keeping the tiger satiated

At one point during his ordeal, Pi sums up enough courage to believe that he has a fighting chance against the hyena. But when he catches a glimpse of Richard Parker, he believes his fate is sealed.

However, he later arrives at the conclusion that keeping the tiger alive by supplying it with adequate food and water would in turn keep him alive as well.

Similarly, Najib is in no position to act against Ridhuan Tee bin Abdullah and the peddlers of hate speeches.

To crack down on those championing the cause of the Malay race and Islam would upset the precious votes preserving BN in power and further antagonise the ultras in Umno.

As for the Chinese, the prime minister cannot be too concerned about their sentiments or feelings. Whatever he does, their votes would not return. So why stick his head into the jaws of a tiger for them?

Pandering to their demands prior to the polls had earned the wrath of some influential people and the conservative Malays. It would not be wise to push his luck too much, for it is already a miracle that he has not been mauled after the last electoral debacle.

With parties like MCA and MIC being reduced to mere decorative items, it is the conservative Malays who hold the key to Umno and BN's survival. With defeat nibbling at the heels, one is forced to up the ante on issues of race and religion.

Fear must be struck in the Malay heart that with the powerful Chinese DAP in the opposition bloc - handing Pakatan Rakyat the keys to the administrative capital would sound the death knell for their special rights and erode the significance of their religion.

So Najib and the so-called moderates in Umno can withstand the attack of the hyena. But should Ridhuan Tee bin Abdullah pounce, it would be end game. The tiger must be kept satiated.

But at least to Pi's credit, he attempts to tame Richard Parker.

The nation crumbles

But Khairy Jamaluddin was spot on when he remarked that bigotry could be found in all races, parties and religions. It is not something exclusive to Umno, Malays or Muslims.

True enough. I have come across Chinese who frighten their children into finishing their meals with the "Indian man will catch you" threat. As well as Chinese and Malays who believe that all Indians are drunkards and criminals.

I have met Indians who believe that the Chinese would drink the blood of others and swindle them. There are Indians and Malays who believe that the Chinese are exploitative and would never promote a non-Chinese in their organisations even if the person is deserving.

I have also met Chinese and Indians who think that all Malays are bone-idle, sex offenders and not the sharpest of tools in the shed, who are undeserving of their positions and wealth.

And let us not even get started on the Christian, Hindu, Buddhist and God knows what else fanatics out there who deride the faiths of others.

However, the difference is that groups like Isma seem to have the tacit backing of our leaders and that is what bodes ill for this nation. It is the selfish shortsightedness of winning the next election at the expense of the next generation.

When the "pendatang" and "intruders" cross the line, even by a fraction, justice is swift. But such is not the case when Ridhuan Tee bin Abdullah embarks on a marauding rampage.

Police reports are lodged, investigation papers are opened, statements are recorded, evidence is gathered, and all of this is then submitted to the attorney-general's office, where the files gather dust or are stamped "No Further Action".

The politics of race and religion is this nation's greatest bane, which has caused and continues to widen the fissures, where the focus over the decades has been on tolerance and not integration.

What is more disheartening is when those like the Oxford-trained Umno Youth chief also turn the wheels of this vicious political cycle.

One can understand the Ahmad Zahid Hamidis, Liow Tiong Lais or G Palanivels taking this route, for it is only in BN can such dim bulbs have a bright future.

But it is an ignominy when young and capable leaders who can alter the fate of this nation decide instead to focus on their own fates in terms of personal elevation.

With the sins of the past revisiting us and as we reap what has been sown in the name of greed for power and wealth, our nation crumbles in the harvest.

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