

**Umno ratchets up tempo**  
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COMMENT It's the winter of Umno's discontent with Pakatan Rakyat, with PKR in the eye of the maelstrom.

The heightened attacks on PKR supremo Anwar Ibrahim, the suspension of Suara Keadilan, the warnings to Harakah, the investigations of Pakatan legislators for alleged corruption, the claim that the Selangor Pakatan government is in the red, all point to the commencement of a new phase in Umno's run-up to the next general election.

NONE Given the stated unpreparedness of Umno allies MCA, MIC and Gerakan for the polls, it's a surprise why Umno has gone on war footing this early.

It is too early to ratchet up the tempo to battle-speed if, say, the election is for the period April-June next year.

Public fatigue with electioneering is a real danger, and given that Umno-BN has the greater need to come up in the numbers turning out for them, they stand to lose more from any danger of voter apathy.

Could the new frenzy in Umno's attacking salvos on Pakatan be a tactic to disperse and cause confusion in its ranks so that an anticipated jailing of Anwar for sodomy will be a fait accompli foisted on forces too demoralised to resist?

The case is scheduled to end in August just when Ramadan begins and a verdict expected to be delivered shortly after.

Thus far, the case has been remarkable only in the court's refusal to grant the defence aspects of due process normally accorded the accused.

In this respect, it's ominous for Anwar that the contretemps surrounding his criticisms of communications consultant Apco Worldwide and of Israel's attack on the humanitarian aid flotilla to Gaza have attracted adverse notices in Washington.

Those criticisms have put Anwar in the bizarre situation of being branded anti-Semitic in the US and a puppet of Jewish interests by his critics in Malaysia.

Hurtful to Anwar's cause

A Washington rendered mute over his anticipated jailing would be hurtful to Anwar's cause. Needless to say, his being seen as a friend of the Jews is damaging to his standing among Muslims in Malaysia.

In the event of Anwar's jailing, no amount of pressure from his allies elsewhere in the world will have as much effect on Kuala Lumpur as an admonishing word followed by a modicum of action from the US State Department.

Umno appears determined to portray Anwar as philo-Semitic among Muslims in Malaysia even as the sodomy case against him is enfeebled by the stark refusal of the court to grant him significant aspects of due process.

suara keadilan report on felda bankrupt 220610They are opting for the next-most lethal stick with which to beat him after the deadliest one - a charge of sodomy - withers for lack of credibility.

And by attempting to shutter the party organs, such as Suara Keadilan (left) and Harakah, Umno is trying to shut off the conduits by which vital sections of the Malaysian electorate are fed information for an informed choice at the next election.

In this light, then, it is not surprising that Umno has gone on a war footing this early. TERENCE NETTO has been a journalist for close on four decades. He likes the occupation because it puts him in contact with the eminent without being under the necessity to admire them.

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