

Unquiet desperation in political circles
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COMMENT "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation," said Henry David Thoreau.

Thoreau's intuition about the angst felt by ordinary people going about daily lives must exempt politicians: their desperation is decidedly unquiet.

There has been plenty of unquiet desperation in political circles just now.

By Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's reckoning, it was Anwar Ibrahim's desperation over the way his sodomy case was going that motivated his friends, Al Gore and Paul Wolfowitz, to call for US government support for him in an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal last week.

An attack of the jitters over evidence that Chinese voter support for PAS is not wavering must have led MCA president Chua Soi Lek to issue a poorly-argued caution that the governance track record in Muslim majority nations left much to be desired.

A tad more than desperation – it may be diabolism even – saw Muhyiddin congratulate PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang on the latter's insistence that the policy of affirmative action for bumiputeras be retained, a stance that was more nuanced than Muhyiddin cared to see.

Muhyiddin saw in Abdul Hadi's comments what it was expedient for him to see - a rejection of DAP MP Tony Pua's suggestion that discounts for bumiputeras on luxury property purchases be abolished.

Bounder Muhyiddin generates grist for his mill at will.

Renew efforts at Malay unity

Within a day of one gratuitous extrapolation, Muhyiddin was on to another. He said the holy month of Ramadan's arrival made it fraternally imperative that Umno renew efforts at achieving Muslim unity by talking to PAS.

Never mind Umno's overtures in the matter have been regularly spurned by PAS, albeit not very convincingly. But its most recent rejectionists in PAS were Abdul Hadi and top vice-president Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man, both of whom are not certified members of the party's liberal wing, the one that's unswervingly hostile to any notion of unity talks with Umno.

Desperation is like feminine modesty: too strong an imputation or protestation of it calls unwelcome attention to oneself.

Some would say it is desperation that keeps the sodomy case against Anwar persisting in the courts. Based on the evidence adduced thus far, the case is so vacuous its proponents must feel more threatened by the alternative – dropping it altogether.

It's facile to call targets of a seeming witch-hunt desperate when they succeed in drawing international attention to their plight.

Human rights campaigners from Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi to Zimbabwe's Morgan Tsvangirai have gained from international exposure of their situation.

Desperation is as desperation does. The less we see of it the better; also, more clarity obtains the less it's imputed to others.

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