

**The gyrations of Harussani**  
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It is said that one definition of a fanatic is someone who redoubles his effort after he has lost sight of his goal. Right now that description would fit Perak state mufti Harussani Zakaria to a T.

Not for nothing has he been tagged by critics as 'Umno's mufti'.

When he first made his entrance into the country's news-maker's domain four years ago, he managed to be mildly amusing even as he deployed stories of the hair-raising kind.

Harussani Zakaria Such as word that there were going to be mass conversions to Christianity from Islamic ranks at a church in Ipoh. Now this hoary old story of conversions has a pedigree going back few centuries, in spite of recurring evidence that in parts of the world where it tends to rear its head, the conversions have been the other way round.

But some myths have a potency that facts on the ground struggle to destroy. Like the czarist forgery, 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion', that tale of Jewish conspiracies to dominate the world which still enjoys credibility in some parts of the world.

The contortions Harussani (above) went through trying to explain where he got his information on conversions in Ipoh four years ago were enough to call attention to his credulity and fitness for public office.

Moral hazard

Never mind the matter of his advice on what to do with non-adherents who criticise his religion that appeared on a website (below) associated with him. It would have got him on a charge of incitement but that advice was quickly deleted from the website. The public must be grateful for small mercies!

You would have thought the conversion brouhaha alone would have done enough damage to the man's prospects of upward mobility.

But in parts of our country meritocracy is still a bad word: you are more likely to be promoted when you do things the other way round. Harussani went on to receive religious credits and national honorifics.

mufti perak website muhammad cartoon kill them pollThe economists have a word for this: moral hazard. They say this occurs when you offer incentives for perverse conduct.

Harussani went on to validate the theory. The other day he claimed that Pas leaders have met him to seek his mediation in bringing about unity talks between Umno and Pas. When challenged by some of Pas' principals to furnish names, he declined but maintained that as mufti he would not lie.

When PAS' Hassan Ali offered that he had indeed met with Harussani but denied it was for arranging unity talks, the Perak mufti was placed on the horns of an embarrassing dilemma: either he had to retract and apologise or suggest that Hassan was being economical with the truth. He did neither.

Experience-wise all this would have constituted enough deterrence to further meddling in the political arena.

Alternate constitution?

But Harussani is unchastened. Like a hamster on a treadmill, he redoubles his effort when he seems not to know what his goal actually is.

Just now he has said that he knows of people who have drawn up an alternate constitution that abolishes Malay special rights and removes Islam as the official religion of the country.

He has been properly challenged by opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim to supply proof thereof.

The rest of us who are equally keen on the proof are prepared not to embarrass Harussani by reminding him of his stance that as state mufti, he is constitutionally averse to mendacity.

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