

Spin doctors working overtime to contain damage
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In astounding disclosures of US diplomatic cables by WikiLeaks via Australian newspapers touching on controversial Malaysian politics, ruling coalition BN and opposition alliance Pakatan Rakyat were rattled.

These leaks, said to be US State Department cables released exclusively to the Sun-Herald group, recorded opinions of Singapore officials on its regional neighbours, particularly Malaysia. These opinions were blunt, and none were complimentary.

najib pc 091210 01Regarding Malaysia, there were bold comments on the Anwar sodomy case and devastating criticism of the BN leadership, in particular the premier, Najib Abdul Razak (left).

Significantly, Singapore Foreign Minister George Yeo, in his response, did not make any categorical denial.

Anwar sodomy

On the Anwar sodomy II case, the Sydney Morning Herald (quoting WikiLeaks) reported on Dec 12 that it was a "set-up job" engineered by Anwar's enemies, and that Anwar did engage in sodomy.

This US State Department cable referred to information it received from Australia's Office of National Assessment's intelligence unit, which received the same from the Singapore intelligence officials, who in turn based its opinion on "technical intelligence", which was not defined.

In an angry rebuttal, PKR Communication Director Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad alluded this "technical intelligence" as the handiwork of the Malaysian Special Branch, and he asked why the Singapore Intelligence Services colluded with the former.

He also asked Singapore to reveal this "technical intelligence" since it was the basis of its opinion.

In a subsequent press statement, PKR Secretary General Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, articulated its stand that comments made by the Singapore officials were merely personal opinions unsubstantiated by facts and must "be viewed in the context of their broad criticism of Malaysia, with nobody being spared".

Otherwise, Saifuddin said, "Najib would have a tough time explaining the damaging allegations made against him".

Saifuddin stressed that the only way to resolve this age-old "mud-slinging" is to have a "fair and just trial", for which he "welcomed the leaked cable if it in anyway provides new evidence or factual insights that can guarantee justice will be preserved."

As a political observer, I cannot help but note that while the sodomy case being political persecution is common knowledge due to the universally condemned tactics employed against Anwar, the allegation that sodomy was actually committed, stands against facts and logic.

NONE If complainant Saiful Bukhari (right) was truly sodomised in a sex trap as alleged in WikiLeaks, it defies all logic that Saiful did not rush to report to the police and have an immediate medical examination to ensure that all evidence of sodomy were recorded and preserved. Instead, he was only examined by medical doctors two days later.

If the prosecution and judiciary were dedicated to seeking truth and serving justice, why did they fight tooth and nail to deny Anwar the fundamental rights - as mandated by Malaysian laws and practiced in all democratic countries - to have access to the basic documents needed for his defence, such as the complainant's police statement, original medical reports and medical notes, video recordings to the concerned condominium, etc.?

Unless these questions can be satisfactorily answered, the opinion of the Singapore Intelligence service should mean nothing to the Malaysian public.

Devastating critique of BN leadership

What should be of great interest to Malaysians should be the thoughts of the Singapore leadership on its Malaysian counterpart - thoughts that should not be exposed for diplomatic reasons. In this respect, WikiLeaks provided invaluable insights.

The Age reported on Dec 12 (from WikiLeaks) that all the three top Singapore officials - Peter Ho, Bilahari Kausikan and Tommy Koh - gave damning assessments of Malaysia.

In a meeting in September 2008, Kausikan, now permanent secretary in the Foreign Ministry, told US Deputy Secretary of Defence for East Asia David Sedney that "the situation in neighbouring Malaysia is confused and dangerous", fuelled by a "distinct possibility of racial conflict" that could see ethnic Chinese "flee" Malaysia and "overwhelm" Singapore.

Comments regarding specific Malaysian leaders are reported as follows.

Najib Razak (then deputy prime minister)

Kausikan said in Sept 2008: "A lack of competent leadership is a real problem for Malaysia" and cited the need for Najib to "prevail politically in order to avoid prosecution" in connection with a 2006 murder investigation linked to one of Najib's aides.

Kausikan further said: "Najib has his neck on the line in connection with a high-profile murder case".

Peter Ho, then head of civil service, told another US official in March 2008: "As for Najib Razak, he is an opportunist. Although he has not been critical of Singapore, he will not hesitate to go in that direction if it is expedient for him to do so. Najib's political fortunes continue to be haunted by the...murder scandal."

Dr Mahathir Mohamad

Among Peter Ho's critical remarks made in March 2008, was one directed at former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad. He said Dr Mahathir has been "throwing stones" at his replacement,

Abdullah Badawi.

NONEKhairy Jamaluddin

Peter Ho said: "The political knives will be out for Abdullah's son-in-law, Umno politician Khairy Jamaluddin (right), whom nobody likes because he got where he is through family ties."

Common knowledge

To observers of Malaysian politics, the above comments are of course not news, as these are already common knowledge. What is more interesting, would be the response of the BN leadership and the expected spinning the mainstream media would make out of these explosive leaks.

None of BN leaders responded on the same day (yesterday).

Significantly, premier Najib turned down two opportunities to speak to the press after public functions.

He cancelled a press conference scheduled after closing the Ikatan Hati Warga Felda Carnival, next to the Palace of Justice. Later, he again declined to speak to reporters after launching Samy Vellu's biography at the Mines International Exhibition and Convention Centre.

As for spinning by the mainstream media, The Star in a front page story today, said that Singapore officials "supported a conclusion by the Australian intelligence agency on the Sodomy II charges against Datuk Seri Anwar".

As for the predicament of the premier, The Star said "They described Najib as being in a tight spot but also at the same time concurred that Anwar was guilty of the charges which they also said were a 'set-up'."

Such spinning! Instead of the Singapore Intelligence supporting its Australian counterpart as claimed by The Star, it was the Australian Intelligence which picked up the information from its Singapore counterpart, which in turn based its opinion on an unspecified "technical intelligence" - whatever it means. It is this type of debased journalism that has caused the Malaysian public to turn its back on the mainstream media.

Persistent critics of the BN government, must have derived a certain amount of satisfaction in that the hidden views of these top Singapore officials, which are reflective of those of Singapore's political leadership, concur with their low opinion of the present BN leadership.

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