

Is S'pore's future in Anwar's hands?
Malaysiakini.com
Disember 13, 2010

The WikiLeaks revelations about the Singapore intelligence service's and Lee Kuan Yew's knowledge of the trap set for Anwar make grim reading. In addition, derogatory comments by Singapore's senior officials to the Americans about Malaysia's current and former prime ministers cannot be ignored.

How much does the Singapore establishment know about the Anwar case? How strong is the evidence? Is Singapore silent about Anwar's trap because of a secret deal they have made with person or persons unknown?

Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has always maintained that sound relations with Malaysia are vital. He is aware of the importance, despite the awkward issues that crop up occasionally: water, land reclamation Pulau Batu Puteh.

Singapore, he contends, must be able to stand on its own as an equal with other nations.

Perhaps Lee was mirroring the flaw in the Singapore psyche about being a very small and vulnerable island. Lee is haunted by Indonesian President BJ Habibie's remarks in an interview with The Asian Wall Street Journal in 1998. Habibie did not consider Singapore a friend, unlike his predecessor Suharto.

Habibie had said, "It's OK with me, but there are 211 million people (in Indonesia). All the green (area) is Indonesia. And that red dot is Singapore," pointing to a map of the region.

Lee knows that Habibie's statement was a vivid and valuable reminder that Singapore is small and very vulnerable: "Given its sheer size and its proximity to Singapore, Indonesia's stability is of critical importance to the city state of four million people. If Indonesia is in chaos, we will be engulfed by their situation. If Indonesia is hostile, we will have a problem".

When political and social unrest brought down Suharto, and resulted in a series of changes in Indonesia's political leadership, Singapore was worried. Lee knows that the Islamic element in South-East Asian politics cannot be ignored. If religious fanaticism gained ascendancy, it would also tear Singapore apart.

Lee once said, "If the world view of Indonesia or its leaders shift, it will have profound implications for Singapore and the region."

Noisy neighbour

Singapore is Lee Kuan Yew's brainchild. Its inception was meticulously planned and executed.

Singapore lacks natural resources. It has a small population to draw upon for its workforce. People, skilled and semi-skilled, as well as professionals, are attracted to the island state.

It offers study loans and jobs, to many Malaysians who have been 'rejected' because of the Malaysian government's racist policies. Singapore's talent pool is brimming with Malaysians. Singapore suffers from its own brain-drain. Malaysians come to fill up the gaps. In the mornings, and evenings, the causeway is clogged with factory workers making their way to and from the island.

Apart from its natural deep-water harbour, what other natural resources does it possess? It smuggles sand from neighbouring countries, to build false beaches and for use in its booming construction industry.

Hard cash and sexual favours pay for the smuggled sand. The environmental destruction of other countries, the loss of marine environments and depletion of fish stocks does not cause concern for the Singapore government.

Singaporeans may trumpet their superiority over Malaysians but that does not excuse them for misbehaving on our roads, or buy up our properties. Not many locals have the same buying power as the Singaporeans who cause prices to shoot up in areas where there is a strong Singaporean presence.

What if we catch up?

Singapore is a hi-tech, wealthy city-state with a highly-developed and successful free-market economy. It has an open and corruption-free environment, stable prices, and a per capita GDP higher than that of most developed countries.

Its economy is heavily dependent on exports, like consumer electronics, information technology products and pharmaceuticals. It also has a growing financial services sector and a thriving port.

Like Malaysia, Singapore's leaders are conservative and the country has strict social controls and draconian laws pertaining to freedom of speech and expression.

Malaysia aspires to be like Singapore but its racial strife and 'bumiputera-first' policies are a deterrent to most investors.

What if Malaysia could be rid of corruption and be relatively free of racial and religious strife? What if the different races and political parties were united and had one common goal – to create a better Malaysia?

Would Malaysia be able to steal the thunder from Singapore then?

What if the man who could unite the people was Anwar Ibrahim? A man whose political life is now ensnared by a deliberate political trap.

Singapore cannot continue to be a magnet for foreign investment or a hub for industry, commerce and transport, if Malaysia comes out of its rut.

Keeping the Jones' weak

Why did Lee Kuan Yew embark on an eight-day visit in June 2009 to meet Najib and Umno people? He met Zambry, who was freshly installed as menteri besar, after the Perak power coup.

He met Rosmah, Najib's wife, who is neither a politician nor holds a position in government; however, they exchanged opinions on bilateral relations and education issues.

Lee is aware that Najib and Rosmah work as a team and that Najib consults his wife before making a decision.

Yesterday, Najib declined twice to meet the press over the recent Wikileaks disclosures. Both 'team Najib and Lee & Co' are not averse to divulging secrets about each other, to advance their interests and to protect their positions.

Just as Umno can only triumph if the 'rakyat' is kept weak, poor, corrupt and bickering over race, religion, schools and ketuanan Melayu, Singapore can only triumph if Malaysia is kept weak, poor, corrupt and bickering over race, religion, schools and ketuanan Melayu.

Both have a common goal: To keep Anwar down.

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/columns/150698>