

**Before history repeats, lift ban on Makkal Osai**  
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**Cheah Kah Seng**

To Syed Hamid Albar, the Minister of Home Affairs,  
MCPX

Your banning of the Makkal Osai Tamil newspaper will send a message to the world that as the new Home Affairs Minister, you have been 'turned over' by the oppressiveness of Myanmar you had been working with when you were a diplomat.

This action completely discredits your past work as a diplomat, and will overshadow your future position as a minister of a civil society. Worse, it will damage the credibility of your boss, the PM, who says he wants to reform.

It also disheartens me, the people who are the boss of your boss (the PM).

The best thing for your credibility, the PM's credibility, and to please your boss's boss (me), is to reverse your ban on Makkal Osai, and release the Hindraf 5 and other ISA detainees.

The above action will do much to boost the credibility of your ministry, the PM, and the current federal government among the people of Malaysia, and will also boost Malaysia's reputation in the world. Aren't we taught since primary school to 'mengharumkan nama' of our country? Where's that spirit now?

Banning Makkal Osai will only ban its 52,000 circulation and probably put a block on its 200,000 readership. Many more than 52,000 will resort to SMS and the Internet because of this. People will not turn away from news simply because you ban it.

In addition, about 10 million readers of newspapers of all languages will be disgusted by this action. This is a bit like the Election Commission abandoning the use of indelible ink, causing a greater damage to the credibility of the EC and the government.

Remember how MCA's takeover of Nan Yang Siang Pau was ineffective, and worse, eventually led to complete disgust by Chinese readers and voters? So even from a political standpoint, the government has much more more to lose than to gain from the ban on Makkal Osai.

From an informational standpoint, the BN government and MCA lost touch with the ground without the criticism aired through the old Nan Yang, which also caused other Chinese newspapers to become tamer and less informative. Without competing opinion polls, you were flying blind between 2004 and 2008.

Do you want to repeat an unpleasant history for the BN government? It will be a win-win situation to reverse the ban on Makkal Osai. Please act now.

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