

Umno is losing the plot!
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Malaysian politics is getting more fascinating yet volatile by the day, especially in the wake of the sodomy allegations against Anwar Ibrahim, and the shocking claims of Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak's sexual relationship with Altantuya, the murdered Mongolian woman. By launching a swift investigation into the former while awaiting further instructions from above over the latter, the Malaysian police have again demonstrated its selective efficiency. MCPX

Confronted with the latest onslaught, Najib flatly denied any involvement with Altantuya. I am not surprised. Didn't Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi remind us last week that it was instinctive of the accused to deny allegations?

najib rosmah and altantuya murder caseBut if Najib is so confident of his uprightness and moral certitudes, while his wife Rosmah Mansor is as innocent as Snow White, why don't they just respond with a libel action against Raja Petra Kamarruddin and all those who have been slinging mud at them? Why are they allowing the innuendos to escalate into an avalanche of scandals?

Was it not silly of the First Lady-in-Waiting to think she needed no legal recourse simply because she was not eyeing any public office? Or was she suggesting ordinary folks deserved to be smeared but not politicians? If so, would she advise her husband to go to the court to clear his name since he is the heir apparent to the prime minister?

In short, what is stopping Najib and Rosmah from going on offensive as Anwar has done? Are they frightened of more cans of worms?

Litmus test for police

Make no mistake: I am not excusing the de facto opposition leader from police investigation, but merely stating the fact that by suing Mohd Saiful Bukhari for defamation, Anwar has secured a moral victory over all the forces – within or without Umno – that are hostile to and fearful of his resurgence as a political heavyweight.

Whether or not the police and the court will handle the case with absolute impartiality remains to be seen. It will be the litmus test of police efficiency and a golden opportunity for the Malaysian judiciary to redeem itself after years of judicial rot under Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

anwar ibrahim and mahathir argue fightEven if Anwar had been involved in some "non-platonic" relationship with the former aide on a consensual basis, so what? It is high time Malaysians get rid of all the moral vanguards in our midst, most of whom are nothing but humbugs and hypocrites anyway.

A leader is chosen on his/her capabilities, not sexuality. Otherwise, there would be no end to discrimination of various forms: straight against gay, male against female, young against old, Malay against non-Malay, or even fertile against infertile!

We live in a vastly different Malaysia today. Regardless of who was behind the latest sodomy allegations against Anwar, the dirty trick that Mahathir employed with the help of the police and the judiciary no longer works.

Malaysians had been rather acclimatized to authoritarian rule when Mahathir suddenly showed his autocratic streak in September 1998. For those who were clear-headed enough to sense something wrong, they were at a loss as to how best to respond to the deepening political crisis and arrest the eroding civil liberties. Although thousands of angry Malay youths took to the streets, the large segment of the Malay community was yet to overcome the psychological fear of challenging the "Mahafiraun".

Seeing the Anwar incident as religio-ethnic humiliation at its ugliest - unprecedented in modern history - many Malays preferred to deliver their verdict on Mahathir by sending a number of senior Umno members packing and handing Terengganu to PAS in the 1999 general election. Until his reluctant retirement in late 2003, the former prime minister never regained the power and authority that he enjoyed with immensity pre-1998.

Abdullah's idleness

Abdullah's splendid performance in the 2004 general election - recapturing Terengganu and reducing Parti Keadilan Rakyat's parliamentary representation to just one seat - was largely due to the earnest hope that the new prime minister would right all the wrongs and curb the excessive abuse of power during Mahathir's rein.

The Malays, in particular, were harbouring high hopes that Abdullah, buttressed by his Islamic credentials, would restore the faith of the Muslims in a government that was perceived to be corrupt to the core.

Alas, Abdullah appeared to be more like an adherent to the Taoist ethos of nothingness. The sluggish economy was beyond rescue, and his failure to intervene in series of religious and ethnic disputes over the last four years enraged the electorates of all races. The rest is history.

Be so as it may, Abdullah's idleness has been a blessing in disguise, for it prompted the people to organise themselves to challenge the powers-that-be as never before: Walk for Justice, the Bersih rally and the Hindraf protest immediately come to mind. It is safe to say that Malaysians are no longer alien to civil disobedience, and half of the 82 parliamentary seats won by Pakatan Rakyat would probably have been lost if not for the active participation of various civil groups and individuals.

abdullah sapp bn supreme council 190608 Slowly but steadfastly, Malaysians are warming up to the belief that there is no such thing as Malay or non-Malay issues. When Mahathir was exhausting the entire state machinery to ensure Anwar's imprisonment in the late 1990s, his cohorts in the MCA, Gerakan and the MIC were busy deluding their respective constituencies that they should "stay clear of this Malay problem". Caught between Anwar, who had not been popular with the Chinese due to his extremist past, and Mahathir, the devil that they knew well, the Chinese opted for the latter, especially the business community. Certain Chinese "community leaders" were even ill at ease with Lie Huo Mo Xi, the mandarin adaptation of reformasi, which literally means "extinguish not the intense fire".

Grandiose, costly promises

For these leaders with vested interests, the four Chinese characters were too repugnant to be stomachable. Ten years on, the so-called economic clout of Barisan Nasional is as naked as the emperor's new clothes.

2008 is no 1998, and the discredited script by Mahathir is long outdated; so is the legitimacy of the MCA, Gerakan and the MIC. Too bad, that the news of Ong Ka Ting stepping down as MCA president almost went unnoticed last weekend, when most of the media attention was on Quality Hotel in Shah Alam, where PKR press conferences were held.

Similarly, having tasted the freedom from fear, the Indians are, more likely than not, on a lookout for any opportunity to air their grouses and concerns. Whatever promises that Samy Vellu and his party make are as good as Malaysian highways – grandiose but costly.

Would these race-based parties stick with Umno that is morally decadent and ideologically bankrupt, or would they sink with it yelling: till death doth us part?

Would Abdullah, an advocate of Islam Hadhari and once regarded as a more pious Muslim leader compared to the scheming Mahathir, be happy to just step aside when some at the highest level of the Umno echelons are engineering another character assassination, risking his own legacy, if any?

Against this background, are the evil forces within Umno prepared to face the serious consequences – Reformasi Versi 2.0 and a cross-ethnic Pilihan Jalan Raya?

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