

**Anwar an extraordinary danger to Barisan
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Not since the time when the penal colony of Robben Island held a famous inmate has the centre of political gravity in a country riveted on one man than it has on Malaysia's Anwar Ibrahim these past few weeks.
MCPX

The calculation of his significance resides not only in the interest his moves and pronouncements garner, particularly in the alternative media, but in the lengths to which those he discomfits go to show Malaysians that Anwar is dangerous contraband.

140708 01Perhaps the most vivid sign of Anwar's heft in the complex chess game of Malaysian politics was the front-page photograph in the New Straits Times, that unabashed prop in the Umno plutocrats' arsenal of misinformation, showing the horrific gridlock commuters encountered trying to get to work in Kuala Lumpur yesterday morning. What loss of productivity our nation has to bear and what impact this will have on our image abroad!

Interpretation: Anwar's bad for business, a perception that the powers-that-be hope would erode support for him among Malaysia's convulsion-averse middle class and an already nervous business community.

150208 anwarNever mind that the government of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had five weeks earlier raised the pump price of fuel by a punitive 41 percent, thereby giving an assist to the prospects of the opposition coalition that Anwar leads to entice enough dissidents within the ruling coalition to join him to make a government forming plurality in Parliament.

Never mind that irate commuters, slowed to a petrol-burning crawl by the roadblocks, may be tempted to mutter against the government more than the man (Anwar) whom Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar blamed for causing traffic to clog, assuming of course that the political tsunami that occurred on March 8 was not a random happening but the result of discerning choice by voters.

Measures disingenuous and convoluted

One would have thought that a chastened government would have been a tad more imaginative when thwarting the supposed opposition demonstration than by just inserting roadblocks manned by mannequin-like police personnel primed to pluck rabble-rousing Anwar supporters from the motoring throng.

Just too bad; imagination is beyond the ken of this government. Among the Umno cohort, imagination these days extends only so far as getting flunkies in academia to say that syariah law does require the corroborative testimony of four witnesses to an act of adultery; not so for sodomy, so it seems.

150708Things have to be cast in stark, unambiguous terms before this crowd can get the drift. But even when done in monochrome, a person like Syed

Hamid can be relied on to muff things.

In his previous incarnation as foreign minister, he had done enough to weaken the competence of Wisma Putra in handling the country's diplomatic and foreign relations. In his new fangled role as home minister, he is busy reminding everyone that former information minister Zainuddin Maidin was not alone in enjoying a monopoly on the disingenuous and convoluted.

Syed Hamid told PKR's Azmin Ali in Parliament that he did not know why the police had imposed roadblocks. Outside Parliament, he told the press that police took the measures to ensure public safety and security.

The fact that nowhere were to be found evidence of Pakatan Rakyat cadres congregating to descend on Parliament in support of the motion of no-confidence filed by Opposition Leader Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail did not weigh on this exponent of the bland – and, at times, transparently false – pronouncement.

Malaysian politics divided

Which bring us to the reasons for the extraordinary danger - this judging by the inordinate lengths to which his adversaries go to baulk him - posed by Anwar Ibrahim to the powers-that-be.

parliament building police blockade 140708 16The police sought and obtained a court order, no less, to stop the de facto leader of PKR from attending the debate on the motion of no-confidence in Parliament against Abdullah.

The contorted arguments the new House speaker adduced to explain his rejection in chambers of Azizah's motion suggest that any hope that Pandikar Amin Mulia would be capable of playing the role of neutral arbiter in Parliament was a chimera.

Therein the challenge posed by Anwar. He has divided Malaysian politics between those who are prepared to go to any lengths to maintain and defend a creaking, discredited status quo, and those who want change because without it, this country heads inexorably for the precipice.

His supporters claim that Anwar, singularly among the various claimants for the political leadership of this nation at this historical juncture, has the caliber of the alchemist to turn precipice into pinnacle.

Change is what Umno plutocrats fear most and they will stop at nothing to obstruct this nation's progress from the facade of democracy, freedom and justice to its substantive representation.

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