

Malicious mindset, perverted priorities
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The continuing furore over a college dropout's allegation that he had been sodomised reveals the malicious mindset and perverted priorities of the Abdullah administration.
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It is also a gross perversion of justice. Those who would have Anwar Ibrahim swear by the Quran and voluntarily donate his DNA to the police, whose reputation is only slightly less soiled than the criminals they apprehend, have it backwards. It is the norm of the civilised world that one is innocent till found guilty and it is for the state to prove its case beyond any reasonable doubt.

umno special briefing abdullah ahmad badawi announce resignation date 100708 05I can excuse our law-illiterate Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi for not appreciating such nuances, but for law-trained ministers like Rais Yatim and Syed Hamid Albar not to know, that is reprehensible. They are breaching their profession's ethics and ideals.

Besides, since when has our Quran been debased to a lie detector? If only the truth could be thus readily sought, we would not need expensive forensic investigations! Such naiveté!

What with the economic challenges, endemic corruption and rampant crime in the country, our leaders' voyeuristic obsession on this alleged male-on-male khalwat represents a gross misuse of already scarce state resources and flagrant perversion of priorities.

In this day and age, a charge of sodomy sounds so, well, medieval! To think that in Malaysia today, that 'crime' carries a 20-year prison term! Perhaps some diligent law student could tell us the last time there was a sodomy trial in Malaysia, not counting the 1998 case against Anwar that was subsequently overturned on appeal.

That was nothing more than a crude political maneuver to smear and silence the former deputy prime minister. The glaringly shoddy forensic investigation and amateurish prosecution did not in the least embarrass the authorities.

Nonetheless, in the process, Anwar suffered that infamous black eye, the result of being senselessly beaten while in custody by no less than the chief of police. The country, however, suffered an even more damaging black eye, figuratively speaking, from that sorry episode.

Many countries have repealed their sodomy laws making it no longer a crime. Even prudish Singapore reduced the penalty to a maximum of only two years, a far cry from Malaysia's twenty.

Orchestrated political exercise

Such an enlightened attitude does not mean that society treats lightly or refuses to acknowledge male-on-male sexual assaults. Many jurisdictions have removed the gender specificity to the crime of rape, meaning it can be perpetrated by a man on a man. It would not surprise me that, like everything else, the Malaysian penal code has yet to be updated to recognise this new reality.

Unlike rape, which requires the legal determination of lack of consent, sodomy does not have that statutory burden. Sperm (or any tissue) must be found in Saiful Bukari Azlan's anus, a fact that can be established through forensic examination. That overrides the "he says, she says" (or in this case, 'he') argument. The authorities' long delay following completion of the forensic examination signals something sinister.

wan azizah resign permatang pauh by election for anwar 310708 03In the context of modern criminal law, what the young man is alleging is that he had been raped. Of course, in conservative Muslim Malaysia, a rape charge does not quite have the same devastating political impact as that of sodomy. Indeed, in Umno's upcoming party elections, one of the candidates for vice-president was once accused of raping an underaged girl.

This sodomy investigation is less the seeking of justice for the accuser, as Abdullah would like us to believe, but more an orchestrated political exercise in character assassination. Recent public opinion polls confirm this.

Meanwhile, there are two statutory declarations linking Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak and his wife Rosmah to the brutal murder of a Mongolian woman in connection with the scandalous multibillion dollar submarine deal with France. By whatever measure, the viciousness of the crime or the personalities implicated, these allegations are considerably more serious. You would not know that from the reactions (or lack thereof) of the officials.

This sodomy allegation has been commented upon by ministers, senior officials, and members of parliament. Don't they have substantive matters to worry about? Even science-illiterate Abdullah has suddenly become an expert on DNA and its use in forensic investigations!

Now we have evidence that another physician had also examined the young man and found no external indications of bodily injury. This fact was known to the police but they chose to ignore it, until the report was exposed by Raja Petra Kamarudin in his blog.

Although the first physician's assessment was not a formal forensic examination, nonetheless its negative clinical findings cannot be dismissed. Discrepancy between it and the subsequent official forensic examination must be explained. It throws reasonable doubt to the charge.

The story gets even more bizarre. The alleged victim made a special 'visit' to Najib right after the alleged incident. Najib apparently took pity on this stranger. Such paternal concerns! Even more inexplicable is why Najib or his subordinates would even deign to meet this person.

Serious problems neglected

There is no shortage of critical problems facing the country. Citizens' concerns are far more serious than these sexual shenanigans, real or alleged, lurid or otherwise. They are too busy eking out a living. Our leaders' preoccupation with these silly things merely confirm our deepest suspicions of incompetence at the highest levels.

We suffer daily through the rot of our institutions, evident when we visit the land office to pay our assessment bills or see the dilapidation and neglect of our children's school. On the roads, we are often harassed by menacing Mat Rempit and have to contend with the boys in blue demanding their share of the 'toll'.

Where are our leaders? Asleep at the wheel, Abdullah, literally so! With the upcoming Umno

elections in December, they are even more distracted.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, hitherto a trenchant critic of Abdullah, unhesitatingly supports him in this latest action, declaring that it is unlikely that Abdullah is stupid enough to repeat his (Mahathir's) mistake of a decade ago.

Mahathir deludes himself if he believes that Abdullah has suddenly become smart or has his priorities right. Mahathir is also mistaken if he thinks that Anwar is stupid to repeat or be caught with the same mistake.

Contrary to Mahathir's new-found assessment, Abdullah is as inept and incompetent now as he was before Saiful's statutory declaration. Abdullah will remain so until we get rid of him. Mahathir was wrong on Abdullah before (as he now readily admits) and Mahathir is wrong on Abdullah now.

When Mahathir asserted that we must get rid of Abdullah for the good of the party and country, his message resonated with the masses. In supporting Abdullah's current foolish action, Mahathir not only risks diluting his central message but also jeopardises his last chance at remedying his earlier grievous error in anointing Abdullah.

With Abdullah asleep at the wheel, continue to expect the worse. As for this sodomy charge, look ahead to the mainstream media to be filled with silly utterances of our politicians and pundits, as well as prurient details of this slimy case. I for one, do not look forward to the graphic descriptions of private anatomies.

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