

Of Salman Rushdie And The Jews
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I think it is highly unnecessary of political analyst Khoo Kay Peng to comment on whether Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim should or should not meet with Salman Rushdie, or to engage him in a forum organized by India Today Conclave forum in New Delhi India.

Khoo, who purportedly understood Anwar's predicament, said that the opposition leader should be prepared to engage Rushdie or anyone else, stressing that his rejection may dent his international image as a reformist, leading the international community to think that Malaysia's democracy has yet to mature.

Analyst Wong Chin Huat also agreed with Khoo that Anwar was trying to avoid another debacle that may trigger more attacks from his opponents locally. Wong however said that Anwar did not possess enough clout to do more for freedom of speech as Anwar could only do as much as he can. Any more than that, he may hurt himself and the other causes he is championing," said Wong.

Really, political analysts like Wong and Kay Peng would do better by giving Malaysians a truthful prediction on who will win the election, or at least to publish a truthful analysis of the pro's and con's afflicting our current administration or to predict the date of the next election rather than to analyse whether it is prudent of Anwar to reject or to accept who he wants to debate with.

Knowing fully well that local politicians are more prone to play up foreign issues such as Israel and the Jews as opposed to internal issues, it will be suicidal for Anwar to be anywhere near Salman Rushdie.

One must understand that Salman Rushdie is internationally renowned for the wrong reasons. Excerpts from his book has hurt the international Muslim community, and today there is still a price tag on his head, although Muslims are not as blood thirsty as some would think, to go out and take his life.

24 years ago, Rushdie wrote the "The Satanic Verses" which had sparked international outrage and wide spread condemnation among the international Muslim community which deemed his piece as an insult to Islam. Since then, he has spent many years in hiding, under heavy guard after Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued an edict in 1989 calling for his death.

When the Wall Street Journal quoted Anwar as saying that he "supports all effort to protect the security of Israel.", these words alone have caused the Malaysian government to crucify Anwar mercilessly, accusing him of sleeping with the Jews.

Anwar came under constant fire from Umno and even PAS, a political party with the opposition coalition which has called for the former to retract his statement.

During the onset of parliament, there was a heated argument between UMNO Youth Chief Khairy Jamaludin and Anwar Ibrahim over the 'Israel' issue while UMNO information chief Ahmad Maslan had made a statement that Anwar's ties with Jewish Organizations was a serious cause for concern that warrants an investigation.

Today, Anwar spends a lot of his precious time answering absurd allegations lodged against him, attending court and giving police statements leaving him with little time to strategize and plan the opposition's next move.

Anwar knows better than to put himself in another embarrassing position or give his detractors room to manoeuvre his schedule, or opportunities to pile upon him any new trumped up charges. He still has the upper hand, and he intends to keep it that way.

On another note what is the big deal about the Jews? Most Malaysians would not recognize a Jew if they see one, or know about any credible Jewish conspiracies to conquer the world, let alone the simple Malay folk that resides deep in the interiors of the country.

Lately, allegations of Malaysian palm oil exports to Israeli ports at a time when Malaysia was running out of cooking oil were highlighted, but the government seemed to be very quiet about it.

No one seems to be chiding Mahathir for writing to the Israeli Government in the past, nor his meeting with Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister in Paris in 1994.

So it is highly unnecessary for the government to ask DAP and PAS to state their stand on this issue.

And for the current government to use the anti-Jew bogeyman to embarrass the opposition coalition is rather childish. There are 14 million Jews in the world today against a billion Muslims, and do we think that the billion Muslims are the least bit concerned or obsessed with what the little green men from Israel may be up to?

In a statement by PAS President Hadi Awang; he said that there is nothing wrong to embark on a commercial venture or to cooperate with the Jews, as long as Muslims do not support 'Zionism' which is a fanatical ideology that some Jews practise. Hopefully, this statement will put to rest the current 'obsession' by the current government on anything Jewish. You can be sure that UMNO is not going to keep quiet about this issue, and it will be exploited to further embarrass PAS as Jew sympathizers in the near future.

And now that PAS has made known its stand on the Jewish non issue, it is up to the government to think of something more creative and credible to tarnish the opposition than to continue trumpeting the anti-jew issue which seems rather comical. And by the way Salman Rushdie is a Kashmiri and not a Jew.

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