

Cable: Hisham blamed MCA for not containing Umno fallout
The Malaysian Insider
August 31, 2011
By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 31 — Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein had suggested in 2007 that MCA was at fault for being too weak to manage the reaction of non-Malays to the racially-charged rhetoric of the 2006 Umno general assembly.

Hishammuddin — who was the Umno Youth chief then — had told diplomats from the United States that Umno's race rhetoric was necessary to vent the frustrations of the Malays, according to a leaked US cable released on Malaysia Today.

According to the diplomatic note sent to Washington, Hishammuddin had also told the US ambassador here that Washington should expect similar anti-US rhetoric occasionally, but that those on the receiving end of these attacks should not fear as the government would not allow it to get out of hand.

"The country's 'racial splits are now more pronounced,' and Malays still do not feel on par with other races. The Malay youth became overly emotional regarding matters of race and religion, and needed to 'release pressure,' as they did during the November 2006 Umno General Assembly (which featured heated racial rhetoric that was broadcast on national television).

"Naturally, there would be a reaction to such venting. In the case of the Umno general assembly, it was a shame, Hishammuddin added, that the MCA had not been strong enough to manage the reaction," said the cable leaked by whistleblower site WikiLeaks and published today on the Malaysia Today news portal.

According to the wire that appears to have been written by then ambassador Christopher Lafleur in early 2007, Hishammuddin argued that other parties in Barisan Nasional (BN) needed to understand the emotional background behind Malay frustration and look beyond the heated words.

"The Malay relationship with the US featured 'the same dynamic,' and from time to time the US would be the object of emotional public criticism.

"This will never get out of hand, the government will not allow it,' Hishammuddin assured the ambassador, but the US would need to adopt a long-term view similar to that of Umno's national coalition partners," Lafleur wrote.

Despite the assurances given by Hishammuddin — who in the 2005 Umno assembly had incensed Chinese BN leaders by waving a keris during his address — several racially charged incidents have occurred especially since the Umno vice president took over as home minister in April 2009.

A few months after he took over the portfolio, several Muslims had protested the relocation of a Hindu temple by dragging a severed cow's head on the streets of Shah Alam.

A video clip of the incident showed that the protestors stomped and spat on the cow's head while police took no action. Hishammuddin was also reported to have defended the

protestors and blamed the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) state government for relocating the temple.

In January 2010, places of worship were firebombed after the High Court ruled that Christians could use the word Allah to refer to God in the Malay language, a decision that has been appealed but has reached no resolution up to now.

The leaked cable from when Hishammuddin was still education minister also said that the Sembrong MP had described the Malaysian political scene as "volatile beneath the surface."

The Malaysian Insider

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