

Show your love, fly the Jalur Gemilang

WHAT THEY SAY

BY ZAINON AHMAD

SCENE: Raju Restaurant, PJ.

CHONG: So how was Raya, Azman, Cikgu?

Azman: Not too bad. But I think the young people enjoy it more. In my case most of the time I watched my children entertaining their friends and occasionally helped my wife carry the used plates to the sink. I suppose that's what Raya has come down to for me.

Chong: What about on the eve of Raya, didn't you help to make the *lemang* and *rendang* or *ketupat*? And weren't your wife and daughters busy making cookies?

Azman: Make? We hardly make anything these days. If you get whiffs of *lemang* and *rendang* being cooked you can be sure it is not coming from my house. It is probably coming from the nearby stall or in front of the mosque. As for cookies, you get jars of them before Raya. And some office workers take orders for cookies. Just ask them for the sample book and you get all that you want.

Chong: So your wife and mother didn't have much to do?

Azman: Nothing. My mother never moved from her spot in front of the TV watching Astro.

Zain: Not quite true lah. Your mother and your wife were probably busy changing the curtains and cushion covers. But when I was young, Raya was different. Everyone in the family was busy with something or other, *bakar lemang*, stir the *rendang* and *dodol*, clean the house and the compound, change the

curtains and so on. We cooked everything. The *kuéh* were more of the traditional type, like the *bahulu* (traditional Malay sponge cake), *kuih loyang* (honeycomb cookies) and *kuéh bangkit*

(traditional coconut biscuits). Never heard of "cookies". But nowadays even my old aunties in the kampong don't talk of *kuéh bangkit* anymore, it's now cookies this and cookies that.

Mohan: Things change you know.
Zain: Sadly so.

Mohan: Even among the Indians most women have found it convenient to buy the *murukku* from the supermarket. They order spring hoppers and *idli* from the restaurants to serve their guests.

Chong: Same with the Chinese ma. They buy almost all the items for the New Year Eve dinner, including the *yee sang*.

Zain: I suppose whatever they can buy they buy. Making them seems such a waste of time these days, time consuming and all just for a few people. Not worth the effort. Also we mustn't forget that women work these days. After a day at the office it is unthinkable for them to rush to the kitchen to make *kuih bakul* (nian gao), *ladu* (Indian sweets) and *ketupat*. But I notice Indian women still make fresh curries especially mutton curry to go with the spring hoppers or *dosai*.

Mohan: Don't be deceived Cikgu, many are ordering them from restaurants and caterers. So be careful not to be too effusive in praising the mutton curry when you come to my house. My wife may feel a little uncomfortable. My mother who used to insist that she cooks the mutton curry every Deepavali morning – she used to cook the best mutton curry this side of Suez, so my

friends said – has given up. She insists she is much too old now.

Chong: By the way it's 10 days to Merdeka Day. Have you got your flags flying yet.

Mohan: My *Jalur Gemilang* or Glorious Stripes has been fluttering and dancing in the wind since the first day of August. It will stay there till Malaysia Day.

Azman: But I still don't see many flags around. In Section 14 in Subang Jaya, for instance, I see only three flags in a street of 200 houses.

Chong: Almost the same everywhere. Many people say it's too much trouble. So why bother. Some say that just because they do not fly the *Jalur Gemilang* does not mean they are unpatriotic or do not love this country. Maybe they are more patriotic than those that fly the flag.

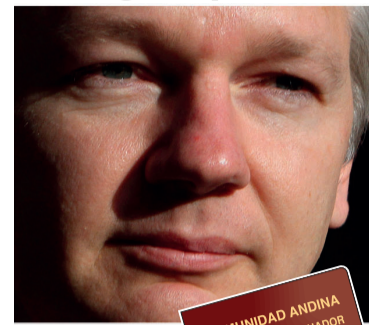
Zain: It's like this. When a young couple sits on a bench, in deep embrace, in the Lake Gardens under the moonlight, it seems irrelevant for the lovers to say "I love you". But they do.

Chong: Why do you fly your *Jalur Gemilang* in front of your house, Cikgu?

Zain: I love this country. I draw sustenance from it. It is a unique country, multiracial and multicultural. And despite that we live in peace. I don't hate this country just because I don't like the government. Involvement in efforts to change the government does not mean I love my country less. They are separate. There are warts of course. But I love my country, warts and all. For all that I think flying the *Jalur Gemilang* on its birthday is but a small token of how I feel towards it.

Mohan: I agree with you absolutely. So please, just fly the *Jalur Gemilang*.

Assange's options for leaving embassy



ESCAPING EMBASSY

Assange has been granted asylum by Ecuador. But police have right to arrest him for breach of bail if he steps outside



Assuming he evades arrest outside embassy, he could get into diplomatic car. Police would have right to stop car, but no power to search it

He could be smuggled out in diplomatic bag. But customs have right to open it if they suspect it does not contain official materials

Assange could stay in embassy. Cardinal Jozsef Mindszenty spent 15 years in U.S. embassy in Budapest, Hungary, after Soviet crackdown in 1956

DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange could be granted Ecuadorean citizenship and made a member of staff at Ecuador's Embassy in London.

But diplomatic status must be recognised by host country – something UK is unlikely to do

He could be named Ecuador's representative to UN, making him immune while travelling to UN meetings around the world. He could be stripped of role by UN General Assembly, but would be protected in meantime



Pictures: Getty Images © GRAPHIC NEWS

It's the silly season again

BY ERIC S. MARGOLIS

SUMMER silly season is upon us. First, three Russian women from punk band Pussy Riot were sentenced last week for the heresy of mocking Vlad Putin and the Orthodox Church.

Second, a Swedish public relations firm dropped teddy bears over Belarus, making fun of its humourless dictator, Alexander Lukashenko. He ordered Belarussian air defences on high alert.

Now comes the uproar in London over Julian Assange. It's hard to know whether to laugh or cry.

Assange, founder of Wikileaks, sought political asylum two months ago in Ecuador's London Embassy to escape Britain's attempts to deport him to Sweden. Assange is wanted for questioning by Swedish police over seemingly flimsy charges by two dubious female friends of his of "sexual misbehaviour". Assange has not been charged with any crime.

But if Assange returns to Sweden, he risks being extradited to the United States where his massive revelations of US government diplomatic and military emails infuriated Washington and led to demands he be charged with treason and espionage, both of which carry the death penalty. Sending Assange to the US and the risk of execution would probably violate the European Union's laws and human rights conventions.

It's unlikely Assange would get a fair trial in the US which is gripped by national security mania. At best, he would likely face a long sentence in solitary confinement in a "supermax" prison under conditions human rights groups call torture.

In a violation of the Vienna Convention, Britain threatens to arrest Assange by invading Ecuador's Embassy, provoking a major diplomatic crisis that would threaten its diplomatic posts around the world.

Why, one asks, is Britain stirring up such a storm when Assange was only a visitor? Australia has ducked this issue, preferring to throw its citizen to the wolves. Sweden and Britain have come across as being rather too compliant with US demands.

Just about everyone knows that Washington is behind efforts to corral Assange and ship him to America for trial though his alleged misdeeds were all done outside the US. We are seeing the relentless extension of US

law abroad: under this new doctrine, those who commit acts deemed hostile to the US can be arrested or kidnapped overseas – even if they had never visited the United States.

Ecuador is defying a very angry Uncle Sam by sheltering Assange. A storm of Yankee fury will fall on this small Latin American leftist republic that is friendly to Venezuela, Cuba and, gasp, Iran.

Latin America has rallied behind plucky Ecuador as traditional anti-Americanism and claims of Yankee bullying are aroused. Ecuador's populist president, Rafael Correa, is likely to emerge as a new Latin American hero. EU critics will lambaste Britain as a human rights violator and American toady.

Looking back over the whole Wikileaks business, it's difficult to conclude that the US was seriously damaged or endangered by the emails released by edited Wikileaks. There was nothing life-threatening or earth-shaking in them. But the leaks were terribly embarrassing for Washington, revealing to the public its often muscular exercise of power, strong-arming other nations, and often dim opinions of allies.

Assange was a crusading journalist who succeeded in exposing the dirty underwear of big government. His Wikileaks showed that the US-led war in Afghanistan was truly lost, contrary to Washington's cheery spin – just as much as the famed "Pentagon Papers" of the 1970's revealed and debunked official lies about the Vietnam War. At the time, Daniel Ellsberg, the patriotic official who released the "Pentagon Papers", was also denounced as a traitor.

No question that Assange is annoyingly arrogant and a relentless publicity-seeker. But Assange's real crime is "lèse majesté", a French offence of annoying or embarrassing the monarch. Washington is reacting like Putin or Lukashenko.

We now wait with baited breath to see if those naughty Pussy Riot girls are locked away in one of Russia's ghastly prisons; if Lukashenko's air force bombs Sweden's teddy bear factory; and if Uncle Sam moves heaven and earth to squash the annoying pest, Julian Assange.

Eric S. Margolis is an award-winning columnist. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

LETTERS

letters@thesundaily.com

London 2012: Women the winners

NEITHER at the ancient Olympics in 776BC nor when the modern Olympics started in 1896 were there any female competitors. Even at the 1996 Atlanta Games, more than two-dozen countries did not field a woman.

But, London 2012 changed all that. There were more female athletes, from more countries, contesting more medals than ever before. Three of the five biggest delegations, the United States, China and Russia, brought more female athletes than men, and the women came through in a big way. Women won 29 of the 46 golds won by the US, which topped the medallists, while female competitors accounted for 20 of China's 38 golds.

For the host nation, London 2012 proved one of the most successful Games ever, especially for its female athletes who won gold, among others, in cycling, equestrian and rowing events, several for the first time, helping Britain to its 3rd placing in the gold medals and its best tally since 1908.

For the first time: Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Brunei entered female athletes; each of the 204 nations sent at least one female competitor; and every one of the 26 sports had female competitors.

But much more, there were outstanding feats galore by the women that will always be remembered.

Two 16-year-olds made history:

China's swimmer, Ye Shiwen, produced the first world record of the London Olympics winning the 400m individual medley on the opening night, and won a second gold in the 200m individual medley setting an Olympic record; equally stunning was US swimming sensation, Melissa Franklin, called "Missy the Missile", who won five medals including four gold, setting world records in the 200m backstroke and the 4x100m medley relay – the most successful female athlete of London 2012.

India, too, created history, in badminton and boxing, when Saina Nehwal won bronze in the women's singles, and in the newly introduced women's boxing, Mery Kom Chung-neijang Hmangte won bronze in the flyweight division.

Another US teenager, Gabby Douglas, rewrote the record books, winning the first time for the US the most coveted title in women's gymnastics – a gold in the women's individual all-around competition. Later, Gabby won a second gold in the team competition.

South Korean fencer, Shin A-Lam, will be remembered for turning defeat to triumph. Having lost her semifinal match due to a technical timing error, the whole world saw Shin on the platform, crying for almost an hour while awaiting her appeal, which she

lost. Shin refused a consolation medal offered by officials, but later returned to heroically win gold in the team competition.

To cap it all, "a perfect race" was what some sports commentators called the US women winning the 4 x 100m relay, breaking the 27-year-old world record by a sizeable margin. A member of that team, Allyson Felix, won three track gold medals, only the second woman in Olympic history to do so, having earlier won the 200m individual gold and was later also part of the 4x400m relay winning team.

And, let's not forget Pandelega Rinong Pamg's heroic bronze medal win in the 10m diving event, our first winner of an Olympic medal in any sport besides badminton and our first female athlete to do so.

Without a doubt, London 2012 will be remembered for: Michael Phelps winning his 22nd medal and becoming the most decorated Olympic athlete ever; and, the world's fastest man, Usain Bolt, becoming the first athlete to retain three sprint gold medals at successive Olympics, two in Olympic and world record timings.

But, what the women achieved is well worth celebrating as they changed the face of the Games forever.

Rueben Dudley
Petaling Jaya