



*Analysis by Syed Jaymal Zahiid,*

*The Malaysian Insider*

SHAH ALAM, September 5 — “Muslim sensitivities” was used by the Malay residents of Section 23 as the central reason to reject the Hindu temple relocation, but when some were asked today what these “sensitivities” really were, none of them could give a straight answer.

Yet Malay residents of Section 23 said they felt their religion, Islam, had been profoundly threatened by the temple relocation proposal by the Selangor Pakatan Rakyat government.

It prompted them to take to the streets with a cow's head recently to defend their religion; it drove them to discard civic consciousness and adopt extreme measures, to go as far as insulting another religion, knowing full well such action could lead to physical confrontations.

"It would disrupt traffic flow," said one female resident of Section 23 when asked what exactly these Muslim sensitivities are.

The female resident, who spoke on condition of anonymity, was one of the army of residents that attended a dialogue session held by the Selangor government this morning.

It was organised to resolve the deadlock but sadly, the event was fruitless after it transformed into a free-for-all verbal assault session, when the residents turned rowdy and began insulting Mentri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim and other PR leaders.

Residents threw racial insults towards the leaders. They rejected any alternative proposals even before the leaders had managed to raise them. Some accused the leaders of insulting Islam if they were to go on with the relocation.

“We don't like the smells. It would be noisy and the temples would usually get bigger so we just don't want it to be near our homes,” said another resident, Roshan, 42, on why he was against the temple being built there.

When suggested that Malays in other parts of Selangor and Kuala Lumpur have no problems with Hindu temples being built near their houses, even when these areas are predominantly Malays, Roshan rebutted gushingly.

"I am from the May 13 generation," he said, referring to the infamous racial riots four decades ago. "(Malays in these areas are fine because) the land there is limited," he said.

Throughout the "dialogue", residents insisted their rejection of the temple relocation had nothing to do with racism and that they were not extremists.

They boasted of their harmonious ties with their Indian counterparts but blame the temple relocation proposal and its proposer, the PR government, as the cause of the strained interracial bond.

The temple, originally located in Section 19, had been proposed to be relocated after an agreement with the city council and other relevant authorities, to Section 23, some 300 meters from the residential area after residents in Section 19 complained.

But many Malay Section 23 residents will have none of it. For them, building a Hindu temple in the midst of an industrial area to provide their Indian counterparts, which make up about 10 per cent of the Section 23 population, the right to practice their religion is a threat to the sanctity of Islam.

Notwithstanding, almost all the replies given by residents when interviewed by *The Malaysian Insider* cited traffic congestion as the main reason behind their rejection of the temple relocation.

They failed to define how a Hindu temple built some 300 metres away from their houses was insensitive towards Islam but one cannot but feel that as the fiasco goes on, more and more of these Muslim sensitivities will be raised in their arguments.

*Syed Jaymal Zahiid is a reporter with The Malaysian Insider, who covered this morning's chaotic town hall meeting*