

How one balloon man nearly toppled national security

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IN the thrilling pre-Raya episode of *Law & Order: Street Vendor Unit*, our brave DBKL (Kuala Lumpur City Hall) enforcers managed to neutralise an imminent threat to public safety – a balloon man.

Yes, a balloon man – armed with nothing but helium, coloured ribbons and a desperate attempt to make a few ringgit before the festivities – this villain dared to sell smiles without a permit.

Somewhere between Sponge-Bob-shaped inflatables and RM5-animal balloons, the authorities spotted him – a criminal mastermind in slippers.

The arrest

It was a scene straight out of a budget action film – forget high-speed chases or drug busts. This was raw, heroic enforcement – four to five officers against one man.

A textbook takedown. Because when a man selling balloons to

children gets mouthy, fists must fly. The only threat he posed? Emotional damage from witnessing a fully grown adult being tackled for crimes against municipal order. He pleaded. He reasoned. He used... (harsh?) words. Dangerous!

So, they did what any rational, well-trained force would do: punched first, rationalised later.

The “trial by headlines” (or lack thereof)

Post-beating, the city PR machine did what it does best: backstory resurrection. Thirteen alleged sins of yesteryear, dug up like lost treasure. A “druggie”, they said. “Crook”. Labels flung out like confetti to make sure the public would not waste sympathy on the balloon-slinging menace.

Nothing whips up national pride like beating up a man and then telling everyone he deserved it retroactively.

Race-card declined

Of course, this time, there is no race narrative to ride on. Both parties shared the same ethnic checkbox. So, no performative outrage. No hashtags. No national headlines. Just a bruised Malay man quietly bleeding into the white bedsheets of a government hospital.

Had he been of another race, a refugee, a foreigner or even someone with a more “exotic” name, there might have been protests. But alas, he was just... a local “Melayu”. So, naturally, silence is golden.

Public safety first, happiness later? Was this their priority? Could there have been “powder” in those balloons? Or messages of hope and joy – insidious stuff.

Maybe the smiles he sold were laced with subversion. What if a child, God forbid, smiled too hard?

We should thank our stars that the men in uniform took immediate action against this “clear and present danger” to the peace of their beloved city of Kuala Lumpur.

Were they concerned that this balloon man could have floated

away, spreading “Raya” joy without permission.

Poverty is the real crime

The real lesson here? Do not be visibly poor. Do not try to earn a little extra in public spaces without a laminated, rubber-stamped and approved-by-six-committees permit.

And never, ever resist the boot on your neck – not even with words, especially not near a festive season. It ruins the aesthetic because in a city obsessed with order, you are better off being invisible than colourful.

However, let us play devil’s advocate for a second, shall we? Even if the balloon man got lippy; even if he dared to question authority or did not pack up fast enough when told; even if his past was less than squeaky clean, does that now entitle state agents to transform into part-time bouncers with full-time immunity?

Since when did a municipal infraction come with a complimentary hospital stay? What

law, exactly, allows uniformed men to hand out knuckle sandwiches with a side of arrogance, just because someone selling balloons did not vanish into thin air fast enough?

Is there a secret clause in the Local Government Act that reads: “Use excessive force where dignity is detected”?

Or perhaps a footnote that says: “Extra punches if the suspect is poor, Malay and unphotogenic”?

If this is just doing their job, then we need to ask – what is the job? Keeping the peace or peacocking with unchecked power?

So, here is to the balloon man – the villain we did not know we had – may your bruises fade faster than the public’s memory. May your spirit inflate again, if not your balloons.

And to our fearless enforcers: sleep soundly. The streets are safe – from smiles, from joy, from hope. Mission accomplished!

**That One Unlicensed Human
with a Pen**