

# ALIRAN

For Justice, Freedom, Solidarity ● MONTHLY

## BATTLE FOR UMNO

*Politics As If People Did Not Matter*

THE upcoming UMNO election has already begun to receive wide coverage. Columns after columns in the local dailies are devoted to would be contestants and the posts they might be contesting for, subtle campaign speeches by prospective candidates and unending pleas for Malay unity and UMNO solidarity. The way in which this event dominates the media could easily lead one to believe that nothing else of importance is happening in the country these days.

While UMNO has the lion's share of the coverage, the other two political parties which will be holding their elections in the near future, namely the MCA and the Gerakan, have also managed to get quite a bit of media exposure. In their case too, it is the nominations, the contestants, the rival cliques, their motives, their manoeuvres which make the news.

The UMNO election in particular which takes place once in 3 years has become such a big thing now that no other event comes anywhere close to it in terms of its political significance. It is undoubtedly a reflection of UMNO's dominance of the political process. It is UMNO — or rather its leadership — that

sets the political mood, that creates the political atmosphere in the country. This is why it would not be wrong to suggest that ours is a one-party dominant system.

Perhaps this is not altogether accurate. The other Barisan Nasional parties too wield some influence. But the total impact of all the other Barisan parties put together is not even half of the power UMNO commands. It may be more up to the mark, therefore, to suggest that ours is a one and a half-party dominant system.

Why UMNO in particular and the Barisan in general enjoys this dominance lies outside the scope of this analysis. At this point, we will merely observe that colonialism, certain other historical circumstances, the ethnic situation, the nature of the merdeka movement, the limited success of first the Alliance and then the Barisan in various spheres, the effective control of the ruling coalition over the entire political process, the relative affluence of the middle and upper classes, the general prosperity of the country and indeed the shortcomings of the opposition have all contributed to this dominance.

Whatever the reasons, UMNO and Barisan dominance is clearly unhealthy as evinced by the media coverage of the UMNO election. **Firstly**, it creates the impression that politics is nothing more

than the pursuit of power. This will lead eventually to a Machiavellian notion of politics. Ethics, which should be the basis of politics, as it should be the foundation of life, will cease to exert any influence.

**Secondly**, the run-up to the UMNO election confirms one of the outstanding characteristics of Malaysian politics: its elitism. The media discussion about the election is confined to who will lead which division and who will be standing for the Supreme Council election, who are being nominated for the Vice-Presidencies, whether Tunku Razaleigh will contest the Deputy Presidency and so on. In other words, it is all about the UMNO elites.

The newspapers tell us very little about how ordinary UMNO members feel about the election. Do their feelings and thoughts matter at all? Are there certain issues which they regard as crucial in the coming contest? Will these issues emerge during the deliberations at the UMNO General Assembly in May? Or, are ordinary UMNO members there only to elect their leaders? Is it true, that once that purpose is served, the ordinary members — 'the little people' — do not count at all?

**Thirdly**, just as the UMNO election establishes the elitistic nature of UMNO politics, so does it render every other public issue insignificant and unimportant. In the last few months, there have been a number of extraordinary social controversies. It is of course true that some of them — like the constitutional crisis — have lost public appeal. But some of the questions it raised should still be discussed by the newspapers. Should we, for instance, undertake a comprehensive review of the constitution? Then there are other issues which continue to be

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crucial but are now ignored by the media. What is happening, one may ask, to the BMF probe? Is the Chairman of the internal committee of inquiry – Tan Sri Ahmad Noordin, the Auditor-General – getting the cooperation of all concerned? At a more elementary level, has he even received his official letter of appointment?

There are other public matters too of great magnitude which the country will have to grapple with in the near future – and which have been pushed into the background by the UMNO election. One of them is a review of the New Economic Policy (NEP) which the government is supposed to be doing. Given the failings of the NEP, it is particularly important that the views of groups and individuals outside government are given maximum attention. There may be other ways of reducing poverty, of narrowing the gap between rich and poor, of restructuring society, which the government may not even have considered. With the overwhelming dominance of the UMNO election there is hardly any likelihood now of new perspectives on development influencing government thinking on the NEP.

Yet another issue of immense social significance which should be on the front pages of our newspapers is the eviction of 200,000 squatters from Malayan Railway land. What is unfolding before us is a human tragedy of colossal dimensions. The squatter problem is one of the most vivid illustrations of what underdevelopment means in a Third World country. And yet UMNO and MCA political leaders are too busy with their election campaigns to do anything substantial, beyond offering the usual token responses. If politics were conducted as if people mattered, they would spend much more time and energy trying to resolve the problem.

The subordination of issues which are vital to the human being, the way in which crucial social concerns have retreated into the shadows in the face of the UMNO election bodes ill for the nation as a whole. What makes it worse is yet another glaring fact: in the UMNO contest itself there are no real issues. Within the larger context of the UMNO philosophy and its policies, there could be different approaches to, varying emphases upon, a whole variety of issues which are important to the Malay community in particular and the Malaysian nation in general. As a case in point, candidate Y may want a rural development programme that emphasises rural industries while candidate Z may be more inclined to heavy industries and urbanisation. Candidate A may feel that more residential schools should be built to improve educational opportunities for Malay students while candidate B may

want the government to overcome the drop-out problem in primary schools first. Or a certain candidate may be of the view that penghulus should be elected while another may be of the opinion that they should continue to be appointed.

Issues such as these do not seem to engage UMNO politicians involved in the election battle. It is not issues that differentiate one candidate from another. What separates them is the clique, the group, the camp to which each belongs. A certain chap may be regarded as so-and-so's man, while someone else may be seen as yet another leader's follower. It is these 'camps' with leaders and followers in each of them which dominate UMNO politics. They exist at federal, state, divisional and even branch levels. Loyalties don't always follow a straight line. This means that a certain branch leader may be in the camp of a certain divisional leader but the state leader he supports may not necessarily be the state leader that his divisional boss supports. This also shows that cliques and groups are not separated by rigid boundaries. There is a great deal of fluidity as members and lower-level leaders switch allegiances from election to election and sometimes from period to period as it suits their convenience. This fluidity and variations in loyalties at different levels are among the many factors which have prevented strong factions from developing within UMNO.

But the fact remains that personalities, not issues, count in UMNO elections. Groups and followings, not policies and programmes, constitute the substance of UMNO politics. If there is any issue which influences candidacies it is the perennial ethnic question. In UMNO, as in other communal parties, it is there all the time. This is why every candidate, no matter what position he is fighting for, is careful to present himself as a protector of the community. What this means in essence is that one must articulate and act from an ethnic perspective. On the economy, on political power, on cultural identity, on national symbols one must be seen as a leader who will not give in to

the "others".

Preserving one's ethnic image is not like the other issues we mentioned a while ago. For it is conditioned almost entirely by a sentiment, an emotion which cannot be subjected to reason and analysis. It is simply a feeling about one's race and its interests (It is equally strong in the other communities). Unlike an issue like rural industries or dropouts the pros and cons cannot be examined objectively and dispassionately.

At this point we may want to ask: but how does all this make UMNO elections different from what takes place in other countries? Isn't it true that in other multi-ethnic societies too, ethnic sentiments overwhelm other rational issues? Isn't it true that in other societies, whether they are multi-ethnic or not, we also get groups and cliques in their political parties?

All that is true but the difference is that in many other countries socio economic, educational and administrative issues which are independent of ethnic considerations or group loyalties also engage candidates and voters. For instance, in multi-ethnic India, the ruling Congress party embodies varying ideological tendencies. We can speak of groups that want more socialism and groups that want less socialism. In Britain, within the Conservative party, you have the more 'progressive' conservative group presently linked to Edward Heath and a more 'reactionary' conservative group generally associated with Margaret Thatcher. Even in the ruling liberal coalition in Japan, it is not just a case of factions led by powerful party brokers; on certain issues like Japanese rearmament and international trade they hold different positions.

It may be useful to reflect on why the situation is different in our country – though it is by no means an unique situation. Why are the issues as such not central to the elections within UMNO? This is something that we may want to analyse in a future article. Perhaps our readers have some views in this matter. We would be happy to hear from them. □



AN.

# BMFiasco

## Government Credibility At Stake

Some months ago, we carried a feature on the BMF Scandal, setting out the unusual circumstances behind the huge unsecured loans made to several development companies in Hongkong. This feature deals with more recent events pertaining to the scandal, as rumours abound in the face of an apparent 'cover-up'.

FOR several months now, the Malaysian people have been following the continuing saga of the Bumiputra Malaysia Finance (BMF) Hongkong loans. BMF is a fully-owned subsidiary of Bank Bumiputra, the country's largest bank and more importantly, financial symbol of the growth of indigenous capital since independence in 1957, and especially after the promulgation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1970.

Very sadly, most of what Malaysians know has been the result of the efforts of investigative journalists working for foreign business periodicals.

In the absence of an open and thorough inquiry undertaken by those enjoying public confidence, the government's credibility is eroding as rumours abound in the face of an apparent 'cover-up'.

Why was the government so reluctant to establish a royal commission, if it had nothing to fear from it? After all, not only the opposition political parties but also others concerned, including leaders of the ruling UMNO, had asked for such an inquiry.

The committee of inquiry which will table its findings in Parliament as a White Paper will only encourage rumour-mongering and further undermine the government's credibility.

### UMNO General Assembly

At the UMNO general assembly in August last year, everyone thought, after months of evasion and silence, that the national political leadership would confront the BMF scandal squarely: how much was lost; who were responsible; how it happened; what action would be taken regarding the matter; what steps would be taken to prevent it from happening again. Instead, the much-awaited disclosures did not take place. Indeed,

the BMF issue was not even on the agenda of a meeting that many considered the most important political event of the year.

At the UMNO general assembly several years ago, then UMNO president, Datuk (now Tun) Hussein Onn took the delegates to task for their silence over the White Paper on the Bank Rakyat corruption case — for which current UMNO vice-president, Datuk Harun Idris, spent three years in Pudu prison — in his closing address.

There is no doubt that the BMF scandal is one of the two most important issues facing Malaysia today. In this connection, Datuk Sanusi Junid, Minister for National and Rural Development, has reportedly alleged that the issue involving the constitutional amendments has been played up by certain quarters to divert attention from the BMF crisis.

It is certainly of greater political and economic significance than the Bank Rakyat scandal, or even the disastrous 'mystery buying' of tin in the world market last year, which is rumoured to have cost the government about a billion ringgit (i.e. about US\$440,000,000).

### Hongkong Disclosures

In July 83, Hong Kong police obtained documents from the BMF office in the colony in connection with the murder of BMF officer Jalil Ibrahim. These papers showed how the loans were given to George Tan of the now insolvent Carrian group of companies.

The papers were circulated among the authorities in Hong Kong before the UMNO general assembly in August. Instead of pre-empting the Hong Kong revelations with findings from its own investigations, the Malaysian government

protested against the use of these documents.

In a strongly worded note to the British government — which Foreign Minister, Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie now describes as "friendly advice" — the government said the BMF papers were being put to wrong use. It was (BMF assistant general manager) Jalil Ibrahim's murder the Hong Kong police were investigating, not the BMF link to George Tan and Carrian's debts, the note said.

Why the protest? The Hong Kong police would not have been doing their job if they had not looked into the possibility of a link between Jalil's murder and the huge BMF loans to Carrian which he was investigating when he was murdered, for which another Malaysian citizen, Mak Fook Thiam, is now charged in court. Who are Selangor-born Mak's Malaysian patrons and what has been their role in Carrian and the Jalil murder?

In early September, Hong Kong police raided the offices of the Carrian group, making use of information obtained from the BMF papers. On October 2, Malaysian-born George Tan of Carrian was arrested.

Bentley Ho, executive director of the Carrian group, was also arrested on the same day. Bentley Ho was trying to board a flight — to Malaysia! — when he was detained at Kai Tak airport by the police. Why was Ho trying to get to Malaysia while he was being sought by Hong Kong police, and who are his Malaysian connections?

On October 4, George Tan and Bentley Ho were charged in a magistrate's court. Why did the Malaysian government not want Jalil's documents to be used against George Tan then?

Firstly, the papers show that BMF had lent Carrian far more than BMF or Bank Bumiputra annual reports revealed. It was not the equivalent of one billion ringgit, as was previously believed. Instead, the court was told that the total amounted to the equivalent of 1.7 billion ringgit (i.e. about US\$739,000,000). And more incredibly, no one knew what had happened to almost half the amount (about 769 million ringgit or US\$334,000,000).

Secondly, the arrest of George Tan meant that the Carrian group could no longer continue to do business. Its creditors therefore had to sue for its liquidation in order to recover some of the money they had lent.

### Implications for BMF

For BMF, this meant that it can expect to get back only a small portion of the money it lent out since Carrian's assets will have to be auctioned off. According to Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir's estimate a week later, Bank Bumiputra would be able to get back only 25 to 30 per cent of the total lent by BMF to Carrian in Hong Kong.

The Malaysian government also evidently preferred to see George Tan remain free despite what he was reputed to have done. As Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir said on October 11: "We wanted to keep the goose alive. Then, maybe we could have some of the golden eggs."

In fact, BMF kept up its loans to George Tan up to mid-1983, even after Carrian announced in late 1982 that it could not repay its debts! On October 10, a Hong Kong-based newspaper, the *Asian Wall Street Journal* quoted a source close to Bank Bumiputra as saying: "Carrian is BMF's largest client, and of course, the bank didn't want Carrian to collapse. So more loans were made."

Moreover, even after George Tan's arrest, BMF continued to help him. BMF officials in Hong Kong apparently helped to raise part of the HK\$3 million (i.e. US\$300,000) bail for George Tan so that he could remain free until his trial! Why has the Malaysian government acted in such a way as to appear to be "defender, protector and guardian of Carrian boss George Tan", as alleged by the Parliamentary Opposition leader, Lim Kit Siang.

However, circumstantial evidence suggests that the additional loan facilities extended to Carrian were intended to enable it to restructure its debts and thus avoid public embarrassment. Bank Bumiputra is alleged to have been involved in financing the abortive attempts to purchase Carrian subsidiaries — by Fleuret Investments, controlled by Datuk Dr. Mohd. Hussain, a businessman and



"Bank Anda?"

currently husband of a widow of the late Sultan of Pahang, and by Yap Lim Sen, managing director of Ipoh Gardens, a property development company involving Datuk Tan Chin Nam and the Kuok Brothers, and reputedly enjoying close links with the Perak royal house. If the bids had not been pre-empted by the turn of events, funds from the sales would have enabled Carrian to settle debts with other creditors, and thus protect the magnitude of the Carrian-BMF exposure from the public eye.

### "A Heinous Crime"

At a press conference on October 11, Datuk Seri Mahathir described the BMF loan losses as "a heinous crime". Everyone knew by that time that Bank Bumiputra was certain to lose hundreds of millions of ringgit. But the press conference continued to pin the blame for the BMF scandal on others.

If the property market in Hong Kong had not collapsed, "there would have been no trouble," the Prime Minister said. And that was due to British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's "hamfisted clumsy handling" of China's claim to Hong Kong, he said.

But the question is, of course, why lend so much in poorly secured loans to such mysterious and doubtful credit risks on the volatile Hong Kong property market in the first place. Were there or rather, what were the extraordinary and extra-commercial considerations involved? What does all this say for Bank Bumiputra's normal conduct of opera-

tions? Surely, the story does not end with the one plus million ringgit in 'consultancy fees', which has been the main focus of government revelations to date.

BMF was only one of 100 banks which would lose money in Hong Kong, he added. But it has been singled out — "for unknown reasons" — by the Hong Kong authorities to investigate. This may not really be so strange since BMF was Carrian's biggest lender — bigger even than Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, the colony's biggest bank.

Even Malaysian newspaper reporters — who usually face so much difficulty getting information — were blamed. They were told: "Nobody, including you, pointed out at that time (1979) the problem over the loans . . . . If someone had pointed out at that time, maybe we could have stopped the loans."

Most significantly, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir has strongly implied that five officials of Bank Bumiputra and BMF were to blame: former Bank Bumiputra chairman, Tan Sri Kamarul Ariffin Mohd. Yassin, former Bank Bumiputra and BMF director, Datuk Mohd. Hashim Shamsuddin, former Bank Bumiputra director and BMF chairman Lorraine Esme Osman, former Bank Bumiputra international loans division head and BMF alternative director Dr. Rais Saniman and BMF general manager Ibrahim Jaafar.

### Who is to Blame?

Were only these five men to blame?

For example, Ibrahim Jaafar may have accepted 'consultancy fees'; but as general manager of BMF, he is only an employee. Even Tan Sri Kamarul, like some of the others, was a political appointee.

It is widely believed that Datuk Hashim Shamsuddin has been treasurer of the UMNO building fund committee, and rumours abound about the possible implications of this connection.

Did they really act on their own? If they did, they could have put much more into their pockets than one or two million in 'consultancy fees', or less than 0.001 of the over two billion ringgit loaned by BMF to the three ailing Hongkong property-based companies, namely Carrian, Eda and Kevin Hsu.

Where is the missing 769 million ringgit loaned to Carrian? Perhaps the money went to the owners of Carrian Nominees (the parent company of Carrian Investments), which is still shrouded in mystery.

If so, who are the owners? Are they Malaysian interests? What are their political connections?

We all know that Tan Sri Kamarul claimed the next day that he did not know anything about the BMF loans, although he acknowledged 'moral responsibility' as chairman of Bank Bumiputra. Malaysians do not know who is telling the truth, but obviously, there are reasons why he dared to reply in strong terms to his party leader and Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister's statements were "unfair, one-sided and made without a thorough study", Tan Sri Kamarul claimed. The Prime Minister "should have checked with me first; that would have been common courtesy." Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir later said he would "let the people judge" who was telling the truth. Such confidence in the people is gratifying, but the people are also demanding the information to make their judgment with.

Surely such large loans were approved at a higher level as well. And what about the other loans extended until mid-1983, well after Tan Sri Kamarul was replaced after March 1982. And what about loans by other Malaysian banks to similar Hong Kong interests? Rumours abound and only satisfactory answers from an open and proper inquiry can clear the existing doubts.

In an interview, Tan Sri Kamarul went on to attack Permodalan Nasional Berhad (PNB), and by implication, its chairman Tun Ismail Ali, who is Mahathir's brother-in-law. (PNB owns 80 per cent of Bank Bumiputra).

"There will be another Carrian, perhaps affecting one of the high-fliers, even the PNB." Tan Sri Kamarul claimed. "PNB promises to pay at least 10 per cent annual dividend to the 1.3 million

ASN subscribers. Can it continue to do so," Tan Sri Kamarul asked.

(PNB had to inject 600 million ringgit (about US\$250 million) into Bank Bumiputra three months ago. If only 20-25 per cent of the BMF Hong Kong loans are recovered, it will definitely have to inject more. But PNB's operating profit in 1982 was only 168 million ringgit, only a little more than the 167.7 million ringgit in 1981).

### The Right to Know

Many calls have already emerged for a full-scale public inquiry into the BMF scandal. The Malaysian people want answers to questions, and they have a right to know.

They want the truth rather than rumours. Some prominent Barisan Nasional politicians, other politically well-connected businessmen and members of some royal houses are alleged to have been involved, according to these rumours. Their names — and by implication, that of the national political leadership — cannot be cleared without a thorough and open inquiry.

Even some UMNO leaders have called for a royal commission, including UMNO vice-president Ghafar Baba. His son, Tamrin, a member of the UMNO Youth Exco, has questioned the accuracy of Bank Bumiputra's accounts and the violation of several existing laws of the country and has pointed out that "there are other loans extended to the tune of 10.07 billion ringgit as at Dec. 31, 1982." He has also queried the origin and nature of the bank's published guarantee that the Malaysian government "has given an undertaking that it would back the bank fully." Incredibly, Bank Bumiputra's reply implied that Bank Negara had been quite aware of BMF's Hongkong problems before Bank Bumiputra's accounts were published in the June of 1983 and had amended Bank Bumiputra's directors' report such that it's 1982 results "had not been materially affected" by the BMF problems! Even UMNO Youth leader, and hence UMNO vice-president Anwar Ibrahim — a rising star and Mahathir favourite — has called for an open inquiry.

On October 22, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir was reported to have said that the government was considering the setting up of a royal commission of inquiry. He also did not rule out a White Paper on the scandal.

Many people immediately praised him for this statement. After all, the Bank Rakyat scandal, involving far less funds, had merited a White Paper. A royal commission, which at least in theory is freer to conduct a more thorough investigation, was only appropriate, they said.

But exactly one week later, Datuk Seri

Dr. Mahathir announced that the government had no intention of setting up a royal commission! Even a White Paper was ruled out! Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir even denied having said it was possible!

At this point, very few people believe that the internal government investigation will reveal the whole truth behind the scandal. Of course, those who have something to hide or patrons to protect will be happy.

Current estimates of BMF's Hong Kong loans — to Carrian, Eda and Kevin Hsu — are in the region of two billion ringgit (i.e. about US\$900 million); i.e. over 140 ringgit per Malaysian. Two billion ringgit could also finance 100,000 low cost housing units (at 20,000 ringgit per unit), which could house over half a million people. As has been pointed out, this amount could also supply the textbook needs of one million primary school children for 40 years to come. No small sum indeed!

Already about one-third of BMF's Hong Kong loans have been written off because of changes in the currency exchange rate. If a quarter of the balance can be recovered — which is being quite optimistic — this could still mean a loss of five-sixths of the original loans, or about 1.7 billion ringgit (i.e. about US\$750 million).

Several investigations have been started by the Hong Kong authorities into the BMF case and Jalil's murder. While the colonial Hong Kong authorities may have been prepared to 'cooperate' with the Malaysian authorities previously, this is less likely now after several 'indiscretions' were made by prominent Malaysians in response to the situation in Hong Kong. With the trial of Carrian's chairman and the trial of Jalil's murderer still pending, more details will surely emerge whether the government likes it or not.

The two most popular slogans introduced by the present administration have been "clean, efficient and trustworthy" and "leadership by example". Only an open and thorough inquiry by a truly impartial commission will clear the picture as well as the people's doubts, and restore some credibility in the government. The announcement by the PM in early January that a committee of inquiry had been appointed to investigate the BMF loan scandal only confirms rumours of a blatant cover-up.

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*[The author of this piece is a journalist with one of the local dailies. He is a keen observer of events related to the BMF loan scandal.]*

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# Questioning Education

Vinoba Bhawe

*Vinoba Bhawe, now 84 years old, is one of India's most distinguished Gandhian figures. In the fifties he walked all round India, asking large landowners to donate part of their land for redistribution to the landless. This was known as the Bhoodan (land gift) movement. This redistribution however has had only a limited impact on basic agrarian structures.*

Teaching must take place in the context of real life. Set the children to work in the fields, and when a problem arises there give them whatever knowledge of cosmogony, or physics, or any other science, is needed to solve it. Set them to cook a meal, and as need arises teach them chemistry. In one word, let them live. The children should have someone with them, but that someone should not belong to a special category called teacher, he should be a man living an ordinary life in the practical world. The man who is to guide children should conduct his life intelligently and be capable of explaining the processes of life and work to the children as opportunity arises. It is not education to fill students' heads with information, but to arouse their thirst for knowledge. Teacher and pupil both learn by their contact with each other. Both are students. True education is that which is experienced, tasted and digested. What can be counted and recorded is not education. Education cannot be doled out; it cannot be weighed and measured.

Education must be of such a quality that it will train students in intellectual self-reliance and make them independent thinkers. If this were to become the chief aim of learning, the whole process of learning would be transformed. Life-knowledge can only be had from life. The task of the school is to awaken in its pupils the power to learn from life.

The purpose of learning is freedom. Freedom does not imply just an independence of one's own moods and impulses. The man who is a slave to his senses and cannot keep his impulses under control is neither free nor self-sufficient. The question "What shall we teach our students?" is raised in the Upanishads, and the answer given is that we should teach them "the Veda of Vedas". That is to say, the power to study the Vedas,

and everything else for themselves. We have to put into their hands the key to knowledge.

On the completion of his education a student ought to have confidence in his own powers. This is what matters, not a supply of miscellaneous information and a degree.

The goal of education must be freedom from fear. In the Upanishads, when the guru is teaching his disciples he says to them: "O my students, whatever good conduct you find in me, that follow; whatever you do not find to be good, that do not follow." That is to say, the guru gives his students freedom. He tells them to use their own judgment in deciding what is right and what is wrong. They are not to think that whatever their guru says is wholly right. It is certainly true that the guru is endeavouring to live by the truth, otherwise he would not be a guru; but he nevertheless cannot claim that his every action will be in harmony with truth. And so he tells his students to be alert, to use their intelligence and examine his conduct, and to disregard whatever seems to them wrong. And by this means he enables his students to grow in fearlessness.

Fearlessness means that we should neither fear anything, nor inflict fear on others. Both these things are parts of fearlessness. True fearlessness neither enslaves another, nor does it slavishly submit to another.

The only basis for such fearlessness is the knowledge of the self. This self-knowledge is the foundation of education.

## no knowledge without action

The origin of all the world's conflicts is that knowledge has been separated

from action. There is no knowledge without action and no action without knowledge. The two are one, this is not a question of technique, but is a fundamental principle of Basic Education. People ask — if children have to work for two or three hours every day, how are they to learn anything? It seems to me an extraordinary question. What we should really be asking is how they are ever going to learn anything if they spend three or four hours a day poring over books. We never seem to have any doubt that by reading they are obtaining knowledge, and that reading is in fact the direct road to knowledge. It is nothing of the sort; on the contrary, book-learning is like a curtain that shuts us off from the real world . . .

The separation of learning from labour results also in social injustice. Some people do nothing but study and others nothing but hard labour, and as a result society is split in two. Those who earn their bread by manual labour form one social class and those who do only intellectual work form another. In India, manual labourers are paid one rupee a day, intellectual workers are paid twenty-five or thirty rupees. A very great injustice has been done by rating the value of manual and intellectual work so differently. And it is the abolition of such injustice that must be the goal of our education.

Human lives are like trees, which cannot live if they are cut off from the soil which nourishes them. Therefore, everyone must have the opportunity to tend the soil, but at the same time the business of agriculture must be done so efficiently that the smallest possible number of people are tied entirely to the land. These two principles may seem to be mutually contradictory, but they are both parts of Basic Education. It is a

basic need of humanity to be in touch with the earth, and any nation or civilization which is cut off from it slowly but surely loses its vigour and degenerates.

## student teacher comradeship

An interesting light is cast on the Indian attitude to education by the fact that in all the fourteen languages of India there is no root word corresponding to English 'teach'. We can learn, we can help others to learn, but we cannot 'teach'. The use of the two distinct words, 'teach' and 'learn', suggests that these two processes may be thought of as independent of one another. But that is merely the professional vanity of the 'teacher', and we shall not understand the nature of education unless we rid ourselves of that vanity. Our first task is to realize that an 'uneducated' human being is nowhere to be found. But today, all too often, an ordinary schoolboy treats a first-class carpenter as if he were an ignorant boor. The carpenter may be a man of maturity and experience, a wise and skilled workman, who is of real service to his community. But simply because he cannot read and write, the 'educated' boy treats him as an inferior.

The gift of education is not a matter for pride, in fact an essential condition for being able to receive it is that we should grow in humanity. In our ancient books *vidya* (education) is equated with *vipaya* (humility); *vinaya*, in Sanskrit, is a synonym for education, and a student who had completed his studies was called *vinit* — perfected in humility. This humility is the fruit of true education. The teacher must be ready at all times to serve his students in humility; the students must learn humbly from the teacher. Teacher and student must each regard the other as a fellow worker; in former times they united in the ancient prayer of the schools — "May the study of both of us be filled with vigour". The teacher does not consider himself to be 'teaching', but to be studying. The prayer asserts that both live together and both study together. They both understand that the teacher finds his own true good in helping the student, and the student in helping the teacher.

Wherever two people live together in this kind of comradeship giving and receiving mutual help, real education is in progress. The place of books is, therefore, secondary. This idea troubles many people, who think that if the place assigned to books is reduced the students will be deprived of the most valuable tools of knowledge. Books do have a place as tools of knowledge, but it is a very minor place. The major need is for

teacher and student to become work-partners and this can happen only when the distinction between the teacher 'teaching' and the student 'learning' can be overcome.

Education is like the water in a river — what is here today is not what was here yesterday, and what is here today will not be here tomorrow. The river goes on flowing but its water is never the same. In the same way education should go on changing continually, with the experience of every passing day.

Each region is different, and plans for education must take account of those differences. Education will take one form in a town on a river bank, another in a town on a hill, another in a town near a forest. It must vary with the circumstances. The same fixed mould, the same set of text-books, will not be equally suitable everywhere. When there is just one text-book for the whole State no attention can be paid to these local features and variations; in consequence the student's interest is not awakened, and the special needs of the individual town are not met. Teaching ought to fit the situation. We eat today to satisfy today's hunger; we do not eat for ten days ahead. Similarly the student should be given the knowledge that is needed to satisfy the demands of his life today.

## "only teaching"

A young man said that he wished to do some good work for society. "Tell me", I said, "what kind of work do you feel you could do well?". "Only teaching, I think", replied the young man, "I can't do anything else, I can only teach, but I am interested in it and I feel sure I shall be able to do it well." "Yes, yes, I do not doubt that, but what are you going to teach? Spinning? Carding? Weaving? Could you teach any of these?" "No, I can't teach these." "Then tailoring? or dyeing? or carpentry?" "No, I know nothing about them." "Perhaps you could teach cooking, grinding and other household skills?" "No, I have never done any work like that. I can only teach..." "My dear friend, you answer 'No' to every question, and yet you keep saying you can only teach. What do you mean? Can you teach gardening? The would-be teacher said, rather angrily, "Why do you ask all this? I told you at the beginning, I can do nothing else. I can teach literature." "Good! Good! I'm beginning to understand now. You mean you can teach people to write books like Tagore and Shakespeare?" *This made the young man so angry that he began to splutter.*

"Take it easy", I laughed. "Can you teach patience?" That was too much. "I know what you mean", I said, "You

can teach reading, writing, history and geography. Well, they are not entirely useless, there are times in life when they are needed. But they are not basic to life. Would you be willing to learn weaving?" "I don't want to learn anything new now. Besides I couldn't learn to weave, I have never before done any kind of handwork." "In that case it might of course take you longer to learn, but why should you be unable to learn it?" "I don't think I could ever learn it. But even supposing I could, it would mean a lot of hard work and a great deal of trouble. So please understand that I could not undertake it."

This conversation is quite enough to enable us to understand the psychology and characteristics of far too many of our 'teachers'. To be 'only a teacher' means to be: completely ignorant of any kind of practical skill which might be useful in real life; incapable of learning anything new and indifferent towards any kind of craftsmanship; conceited; and buried in books.

It is important to make our own lives a pattern of what the life of society ought to be. If a man can really fulfil his own life, the radiance of education will stream out of itself upon everyone around him, and the atmosphere of the whole neighbourhood will feel its influence. A teacher like this is a school in himself, and to live with him is real education.

The teacher in the school should be the inspiration of the whole town, and the school should be the centre of service. If the community needs medicine, it should be supplied through the school. If the streets need cleaning, the school should initiate the work. The people should turn to the teacher to help them settle disputes. The school should make plans for the observance of festivals. In this way the school should become the centre of the community; it should develop whatever is of value and introduce the things that are lacking.

There is nothing more tragic than that knowledge should be paid for in money. A man who possesses knowledge hungers and thirsts to pass it on to others and see them enjoy it. The child at the breast finds satisfaction, but the mother too takes pleasure in giving suck. What would become of the world if mothers began demanding fees for feeding their babies?

If you ask someone what he is drinking he will answer 'tea'. There is sugar in it, but he never mentions the sugar, he never says he is drinking tea-and-sugar. The sweetness of the sugar permeates the tea, but the man drinks and says nothing about it. Education must be like the sugar, doing its work in secret. The best education is similarly invisible. The more it is seen, the more imperfect it is! □

# SAUDI ARABIA

## Schizophrenic Society Of The Corrupt

THE party this prominent Saudi bourgeois gave would have been no different had it taken place in Paris, London or New York. The Bedouin dress wouldn't have fooled anyone. Businessmen and highly-placed government officials who when they return from abroad swap their custom-tailored suits for no less elegantly designed traditional attire — the *thawb* ( a long silk or woollen gown), a gold-edged *mishalah* (cape) and a *ghutra* (a shawl with black or red squares) thrown coquettishly over the head — chatted in careful English as they sipped their whiskies or champagne.

The consumption of alcoholic beverages is in theory punished in Saudi Arabia with prison sentences, but it is tolerated within the home. As illegally smuggled-in liquor is very expensive, a locally distilled drink nicknamed *sadiki* (literally, "buddy") is the common tippie of the working class.

The rule calling for the segregation of the sexes is increasingly ignored at private gatherings. Women who must be covered from head to foot when they step outside their homes are seen without veils and wearing make-up at middle-class parties, and the more comfortably off among them wear clothes designed by top Paris couturiers.

Party conversation is surprisingly unbuttoned for a country which is reputedly a pillar of Islamic puritanism. Only words of sympathy can be heard for Princess Misha'al, who was executed in 1977 for adultery, and only praise for the British television film on the subject, "*Death of a Princess*", which was widely shown on western television.

The contradiction is all the more striking as the laws regulating women's status are extremely harsh. A woman may not drive a car, go to places frequented by the public without an escort or obtain a job without the written permission of her father, husband, or, in the absence of either, the head of her family. As a pupil or student, she can only go to her educational establishment accompanied by a male member of the family. Only a very limited number of jobs are open to women — in teaching, medicine, laboratories, social service or offices — and even then only on the condition that she does not frequent a male milieu. So, for example, banks have recently had to open branches staffed entirely by women and serving women customers exclusively.

Nevertheless, morals are beginning to loosen up under the corrosive impact of the runaway modernisation that Saudi Arabia has been experiencing in recent years with more and more money pumped into the economy, imports of western technology, increasing urbanisation, an influx of foreign workers, in particular from non-Muslim countries, and the spread of free education.

True, between 70 and 80 per cent of the population are still illiterate, but some 1,200,000 young Saudis go to school and university, with about 30,000 of them studying abroad, half of them in the United States. Thousands of these diploma-holders return home every year and find themselves suddenly cut off from distractions to which they have become accustomed — cinemas, theatres, clubs and cultural associations, which are all outlawed under Wahhabi Islam handed down from the 18th century.

Television, which offers up as "entertainment" programmes of a learned and religious character, bans imported films it considers "shameless".

Everyone comes to terms, as best he can, with this austerity imposed jointly by the government and an ultra-conservative clergy working hand-in-hand. The rich, whether princes or commoners, treat themselves to frequent junkets abroad — occasionally for just a weekend thanks to the private planes they own — having a good time in European or American capitals, on the beaches of California or in Swiss Alpine ski resorts. The less well-heeled let their hair down more modestly in Bahrain, Kuwait or Cairo. And in between, video, which is in wide use in Saudi households helps fill in evenings. Businesses which specialise in providing video-cassettes of full-length feature films, whether "immoral" or not, are making money hand over fist. The Wahhabite kingdom is said to be one of the biggest importers of skin-flicks which are shown in semi-clandestine halls that are more or less tolerated and proliferate in the bigger cities.

Young people are more unpromising than their elders and find it increasingly hard to go along with the ambivalent attitude and the constraints of a dual morality. Stung by the system's "hypocrisy" some of them inveigh against the infiltration of "western corruption", while others — and they are said to be by far the more numerous — rather call for abandoning customs which they consider to be falsely Islamic, or, at any rate, ill-adapted to the requirements of modern living.

"We feel stifled", concluded a student after bitterly complaining especially about the absence of any contact with the opposite sex. He told me that many of his fellow students feel frustrated and seek escape in alcohol and drugs. Both boys and girls are increasingly jibbing at "proxy" marriages and demanding that they choose their own spouses. Since there is no possibility at all of going out together before marriage, relatives arrange family meetings to which the prospective marriage partners are invited.

The appearance a few months ago of the first supermarkets (which I am told are being used as assignation places) illustrates the changes taking place in Saudi society and the contradictions they are spawning. If the "middle classes" who have visited the West are at home

in these tabernacles of frenzied consumption, the recently urbanised Bedouins are visibly less so. Accustomed to doing their shopping in the narrow, twisted and redolent lanes of the *souks*, where they can palpate a tomato or sniff a mango before haggling over its price, here they move about, numbed and gawking, between rows of glassed-in, antiseptic and air-conditioned shelves offering products as alien as American-made ketchup, Danish salmon, Swiss chocolate and French camembert.

Riyadh's supermarkets also sell Japanese-made transistor radio sets and stereo systems, blue jeans from the US and French perfumes — with all the stocks under continuous computer inventory. The electronic cash register, which of course offers no discounts, is yet another object of disapproving wonder among the "non-westernised" Saudis.

The feeling of cultural — even national — alienation has deepened since foreigners began flocking into the kingdom following the oil boom. The population census is not for publication — like so many other statistics, it is considered a state secret. But various cross-checks allow one to place the native Saudi population at between 4 and 4.5 million, to which have recently been added some 2.5 million foreign nationals, who make up the bulk of the work-force.

While the Saudis are businessmen, farmers, top officials, customs officers, policemen and taxi drivers, the Yemenis (over a million of them) are farm workers, dockers or shopkeepers; the Pakistanis and Turks are unskilled labourers; the Indians are refuse collectors; the South Koreans, Filipinos and Thais are bricklayers, porters and waiters; the Egyptians and Palestinians are on teaching staffs in schools and universities; the Americans and British (about 50,000 and 30,000 respectively, including their families) are business managers, senior executives in commerce and industry and military advisers.

Although foreigners form the bulk of the lower layers of the social pyramid, all Saudis are by no means rich or well-off as outward signs and certain statistics might give the impression. Theoretically the annual per capita income is one of the highest in the world (about \$20,000) but the average salary, as computed by the commercial service of a Western embassy, is only a tenth of this. Farmers (who make up about a quarter of the working population) account for just one per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). It is true also that the Wahhabite kingdom boasts of having one car to every four or five inhabitants, but many Saudi families have five, six or as many as ten cars each, when vehicles placed at the disposal of servants are included.

Stores are bursting with food products

the consumption of which seems to be high, yet malnutrition is still present in the country as was confirmed by, among others, a poll taken by the daily *Okaz*. Eleven out of 100 heads of households in Jeddah who were asked what was their most fervent wish, answered they would love to have the means to buy meat at least once a week. Even if this is an extreme case, it is significant in a country dripping in oil and loaded with money.

Social pressures, population shifts, and declining traditional values — the fabric of Saudi society is breaking up under the impact of the uncontrollable growth to which the country is apparently doomed.

32 brand-new tower blocks of a housing development stand in a row in Jeddah. It is a magnificent complex containing 2,000 apartments (each of 220 square meters), offices, shopping centres, playgrounds and even air-raid shelters. The project has been nicknamed the "Towers of Silence" because they have been unoccupied since they were completed almost two years ago. It cost the Saudi government \$600 million. The religious authorities insisted on each of the blocks being provided with a third stairway for exclusive use by women. That added another \$20 million to the cost and meant further construction delays.

But the tower blocks are still empty. The needy people living in the Al Sabil shantytown for whom the complex was built refuse to move into it on the grounds that it neither fits in with their resources nor their mode of living. They would have preferred individual houses better adapted to traditional customs which bar any "promiscuity". Besides, they really wouldn't know what to do with these spacious apartments which would cost them a prohibitive \$600 a month (or three times the average wage) in repayments. For similar reasons, some 32,000 apartments remain empty in Jeddah alone in spite of the housing crisis the city is going through.

Squandering and gigantism are features of many of the kingdom's development projects. The new airport at Jeddah, for instance, is one and a half times as big as the airports of Kennedy, La Guardia, Chicago and Los Angeles put together. Its buildings, which are all air-conditioned with walls and floors entirely paved with white Italian marble, are equipped with highly sophisticated installations and surrounded by mosques, swimming pools, parking lots, hotels, supermarkets, restaurants, banks and a desalination plant.

The entire project, which was planned by American architects, will be completed with a forest of 72,000 trees and 2.5 million green plants, all imported from tropical countries. The Jeddah

airport has been planned to handle 8.5 million travellers by 1985 and ten million by the year 2000. The Riyadh airport under construction today will handle 15 million travellers, that is, three times the Saudi population. By the same standards Roissy in France should be handling, not ten million travellers as is the case today, but 150 million.

It's all like this. Ports have been equipped with facilities 20 to 25 per cent more than peak traffic requirements. Urbanisation work will extend Jeddah's residential area five-fold, although the city's population density is very low. The hotels now being built will in all probability exceed requirements considering that Saudi Arabia has neither a tourist nor a transit trade. The industrial projects currently being developed are huge, whereas the country is underpopulated and lacks labour, qualified technicians and potential markets.

"The biggest project ever conceived in the history of mankind" — to borrow the official blurb — is being carried out at Yanbu and Jubail: they are two enormous industrial complexes, the former on the Red Sea and the latter on the Gulf. The plan is to build two cities, to accommodate 150,000 and 350,000 inhabitants respectively, but in the meantime 95 per cent of the 30,000 workmen and engineers have had to be recruited in some 40 countries.

It is a particularly costly project. Some \$15,000 million has already been spent on drawing up the blue-prints and building a modest part of the infrastructures. As much again will be spent in the next five years. Experts say that from a strictly economic viewpoint the steel and petrochemical works which are to be put up with additional thousands of millions of dollars cannot be justified, since they will probably not be profitable given prevailing world market prices. In other words, Saudi Arabia will be indirectly subsidising products meant for industrial powers.

The Saudi leaders' main concern is something else. They must somehow or other use up their fabulous oil wealth, \$98,500 million in 1980, which was twice as much as the income in 1979, and 15 times as much as it earned in all of the 35 years leading up to the 1974 price rise. To everybody's great relief, the Second Five-Year Plan's costs far overran estimates (\$225,000 million instead of \$142,000 million) before the projects listed under it were completed.

The credits allocated to the Third Plan, about \$240,000 million, will in all probability be insufficient. Which does not displease the Saudi leaders at all. They want to slow down the accumu-

*Continued on Page 11*

*We welcome letters from readers. These letters may be edited for purposes of space and clarity. The views expressed may not be those of the Aliran Monthly. Pseudonyms are accepted but all letters should include the writer's name and address. Letters should be addressed to*

*Editor, Aliran Monthly,  
P.O. Box 1049, Penang,  
Malaysia.*

## Parliament And Bad Examples

Vulgar language has no place in Parliament. It is disgusting to hear of the use of words like "anak haram, kurang ajar, otak kera, otak lembu and baruah" in Parliament. Parliament is the supreme authority of the nation where decisions are taken to determine the destiny of the nation. It should have the sagacity to bring honour and respect to its name. It is unfortunate that what we read, see and hear is just the opposite of this.

The kind of behaviour that persists in Parliament will have a bad effect on people particularly the young. Boorish acrimony and a lack of quorum is not uncommon these days. Yet outside Parliament MPs speak of leadership by example and of the need to work hard and improve productivity.

Finally it is most disheartening to learn that parliamentarians and sometimes even the Speaker seem to be ignorant of the standing orders. Whenever problems crop up, parliamentarians give different interpretations to the standing orders and the Speaker himself becomes confused. In order for Parliament to run smoothly the Speaker should be well versed in the standing orders so that he can interpret them should the need arise.

RRC

*Petaling Jaya*

## Limitation To Basic Rights

We are perturbed by extra restrictions imposed in the conditions of the KDN permit and the kind of information required by the Registrar of Societies in recent months. Both the Registrar and the Publications Division which issue the KDN permits, come under the Ministry of Home Affairs headed by Datuk Musa Hitam.

In the case of the KDN permit we take exception to the additional condition 3(i), which states that the permit can be cancelled or suspended if the publication among other things "*endangers the good relations between Malaysia and other countries or goes counter to the national and public interest.*" This phrase is too broad and infringes on the basic right of publishers to comment and analyse a wide range of issues.

We also fail to see the reason why the Registrar of Societies has called on all societies to submit a copy of the AGM minutes, as well as details of the societies office-bearers (date, place of birth and the name and address of his/her employer).

We urge Datuk Musa to investigate and rescind these extra restrictions and unnecessary paperwork. We fail to see how these restrictions fit the liberal commitments of the 2M administration. We hope other societies will join in this protest against what are further limitations to our basic rights.

Selangor Graduates Society

## Cultural Freedom

Since much has been said by Aliran about National Culture I hope that Aliran could comment on the restrictions and conditions imposed on lion dance troupes, as stated in the NST on the 18th of January 1984.

To me these restrictions are a curtailment of cultural freedom and a denial of cultural rights and equality. Mere harping on cultural principles is not sufficient if minor but real issues like the lion dance are ignored.

Wee Koh  
*Selangor*

## Equal Opportunities

Social problems exist in the country not through any fault of the government but because of the reluctance of Chinese-educated Malaysians to accept the kind of society conceived by our government since independence. If these people, now a minority within the Malaysian Chinese community, were to accept this concept our country will achieve greater progress in every aspect. We will all be authentic Malaysians with a single national identity.

There are equal opportunities in our country regardless of whether one is a Malay or non-Malay. The New Economic Policy (NEP) is a reasonable piece of economic planning and should be looked at from the developmental point of view. In the 1980 World Development Report, our country was ranked 24th out of a total of 90 developing countries. Even taking developed countries into consideration, Malaysia's per capita income was within the top 37%, at the end of the 1970's. The NEP to a certain extent played its part in this and should thus be given credit.

Andrew Chuah Choong  
*Hong Kong.*

*Just as water from the driest regions of the earth ultimately flows into the ocean where already there is plenty, so wealth flows from the poorest nations and the poorest individuals into the hands of those nations and those individuals who are already too wealthy. A man who can afford to buy only one loaf of bread a day contributes to the profit accruing to the owner of the bakery despite the fact that the owner already has more money than he knows how to use. And the poor nation which sells its primary commodities on the world market in order to buy machines for development finds that the prices it obtains and the prices it has to pay are both determined by the forces of the free market in which it is a pygmy fighting against giants. For he that hath to him shall be given, and he who hath not that also which he hath shall be taken away from him.*

Julius K. Nyerere, President of Tanzania  
in Maryknoll magazine, June 1971.

# ALIRAN Monthly

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## Of Rights And Responsibilities

Recently the Deputy Education Minister Datuk Khalil Yaakob and the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi threatened to withdraw scholarships from Malaysian students overseas, who "criticise or oppose the government." They would probably argue that the government is not obliged to spend money on those who are critical of it.

Misguided thinking of this nature is commonplace among the ruling elite and they often use this to threaten the rakyat. Threats of this nature are used particularly frequently, during elections, when people are warned that funds for a particular area would not be forthcoming if politicians from the ruling party are defeated.

It is a shame that those in power do not see it as their duty to serve the rakyat. They often fail to understand that they are merely acting in the capacity of temporary representatives and that all power and wealth belong to the people. Instead of constantly urging the rakyat to be responsible, those who wield political power should begin to shoulder some responsibility.

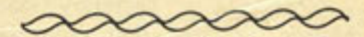
They who have been entrusted with the power of the people have many responsibilities. A responsibility to provide for the basic amenities; running water, electricity, roads and the infrastructure for development. A responsibility to provide education, health and employment opportunities. A responsibility to consult the people and involve them in the decision making process.

In fulfilling these responsibilities those in power should remember that they are doing nothing more than providing the rakyat with what is rightfully theirs. The rakyat have certain inalienable rights and they should not be called upon to negotiate on these rights. This is why threatening to discontinue scholarships for student dissidents is distasteful. The government is obliged to provide educational opportunities for the rakyat and in the event of individuals in need, it is the duty of the government to provide scholarships irrespective of views that the students hold.

This misconception among the ruling elite of the role of government has gone on for too long. It is unfortunate that the rakyat is partly to blame

for this. Having been browbeaten for some time now, they have begun to view their rights as privileges bestowed upon them from above and that it is the right of those in power to revoke these privileges.

It is high time that the rakyat become aware and prevent the erosion of their rights. The rakyat must demand that those wielding power fulfill their responsibilities to the rakyat or make way for others who will.



In converting the quarterly into a monthly, we were hard pressed for time and as such made some hurried decisions as regards presentation. In retrospect we are of the opinion that the presentation of the January issue was lacking in several ways.

With this in mind we feel it necessary to present the February issue of the Aliran Monthly differently. We hope our readers will bear with us during this transitional period.

Rajen

## SAUDI ARABIA

*Continued from Page 9*

lation of monetary surpluses banked abroad which, while they do earn interest, are nevertheless subject to the risk of devaluation in particularly unstable market conditions. Saudi Arabia's foreign reserves are growing at a formidable pace. They rose from \$30,000 million in 1977 to \$100,000 million this year, and are expected to reach the enormous sum of \$250,000 million in the next three years.

The paradox — or "shame" as people are increasingly beginning to say even in the corridors of power — is that Saudi Arabia has absolutely no need to exhaust its oil reserves prematurely and squander its revenues in order to develop its economy. Oil Minister Zaki Yamani himself says that half its current crude output, about five million barrels a day, would be more than enough to finance the Third Plan. If projects which are as useless as they are grandiose are dropped,

a third of the output would suffice to ensure even growth better geared to the country's capacity and its people's needs.

Another issue generating indignation is the fact that the sale of Saudi oil at prices below those applied by other OPEC countries has resulted in an income loss of about \$20,000 million since January 1977 — a princely gift to the US companies in the Aramco consortium which market almost all of Saudi Arabia's crude output as well as to various other Saudi and foreign middlemen.

Saudi leaders, who claim to be standing firmly behind the West, argue they are making these "sacrifices" in the West's interests. The very high availability of oil in the Arabian Peninsula is indeed curbing price increases and has for a long time spared industrial powers the need to reduce their consumption (and waste) or undertake the massive investments necessary to make alternative energy sources profitable.

Overproduction of Saudi oil has mostly resulted in filling the order books of Western manufacturers, who are the principal beneficiaries of recycled petrodollars. For example, last year \$60,000 million (two-thirds of Saudi Arabia's oil revenue) helped pay off Riyadh's suppliers of consumer and capital goods, armaments and various services.

The Wahhabite kingdom is by far the Third World's biggest importer of western consumer goods. It is also the country which allows the highest profit margins to foreign companies. The Saudi government provides these firms with generous interest-free loans — up to 50 per cent of the cost of a project — offers them sites, picks up the tab for job training, grants tax holidays of five to ten years to foreign investors and authorises them to take away all their profits and capital. □

[*Le Monde, Paris and The Guardian weekly*].

## Misplaced Priorities In Politics And Development

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Loh Kok Wah

### The Rise of Communal Politics

On March 22 1976 when the Sarawak National Party (SNAP) announced its decision to join the Barisan Nasional (BN) government, its Secretary-General, Leo Moggie, declared that even though his party was becoming a component-member of the BN government, SNAP would continue to "maintain its separate identity." On that occasion he said, "The Sarawak National Party is a multi-racial party and the party's multi-racial character will be maintained." Apart from this, Moggie also emphasised that SNAP would continue "to be of service and help to the people of the state particularly those in the rural areas."

In 1983 however, Datuk Leo Moggie led a group of well-educated young Ibans out of SNAP to form the Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS). With this move, we see the emergence of yet another ethnic-based party on the political scene. In contrast to the period of the early sixties when there existed several multi-ethnic parties, Sarawakian politics today is increasingly dominated by ethnic-based political parties.

Indeed the emergence of the PBDS is but the latest episode in the trend towards ethnic politics. The Sarawak United Peoples Party (SUPP) for instance, which started off as a multi-ethnic party has become essentially a Chinese-based party in terms of its ideology, leadership and membership. Likewise Parti Pesaka Bumiputra Bersatu (PBB), which claims to represent all Sarawakian bumiputras is essentially Malay-Islamic in its orientation.

For all practical purposes, politics in Sarawak has taken on the ethnic character of peninsula Malaysia politics.

### The Erosion of Democratic Liberties

Scope for political participation in Sarawak is very limited. Legislation with regard to labour, societies, the professions and publications have all resulted in the curtailment of political freedom and popular participation in politics.

What is more disheartening is the way in which legislation "deemed necessary" in peninsula Malaysia has been lumped onto Sarawak. The Seditions Act, 1971, for instance, which resulted from the May 13 riots in Kuala Lumpur, has been enforced in Sarawak despite very different local conditions. Thus issues which are not "sensitive" in the Sarawakian context cannot be discussed as they have now been deemed to be "sensitive". Similarly, despite the fact that the Sarawakian situation was neither studied nor mentioned in the **Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry to Investigate into the Workings of Local Authorities in West Malaysia**, the Local Government Act 1976 was imposed upon Sarawak. Consequently popular elections to town councils have been abolished in Sarawak as well, despite the recommendations of the Royal Commission which advocated the continuation of local elections.

Political participation is further curtailed due to much power being concentrated in the hands of the Chief Minister. Various researches have shown how in the 1970's important decisions were usually made by the Chief Minister himself in consultation with a small group of advisers. Often, even his Cabinet ministers were not consulted. There is much reason to believe that the situation has not changed significantly.

It is significant that important issues like these: i) the rise of communal politics; ii) the erosion of democratic liberties; and iii) the concentration of power in the hands of the Chief Minister were not issues in the recent December election. Instead the election focussed on personalities and the quest of component parties of the Barisan Nasional for seats. The issues were simply ethnic unity and which party could represent this or that ethnic group better.

### The Lack of Rural Development

This situation is disturbing as according to the Fourth Malaysia Plan,

the incidence of poverty in Sarawak was 51.7% in 1976 while the average for peninsula Malaysia in that year was 35.1%. The per capita GDP for Sarawak in 1980 was \$1,382 as compared to peninsula Malaysia's \$1,886.

The situation in the rural areas is particularly bad since some 60% of rural households in 1976 were living below the poverty line. Although the Ibans and Land Dayaks comprised about 39.6% of the state's population, they accounted for 57% of poor households in Sarawak. Moreover in a study of Kuching and its surrounding areas in 1970, it was discovered that the urban average monthly household income was \$528 while the rural one was \$168.

From these figures it is clear that despite economic growth, the rural poor made up largely of Ibans, Land Dayaks and other small groups of indigenous people have benefitted little.

Despite the fact that three-quarter of all Sarawakians depend on agriculture for a living, allocations of public development expenditure for agriculture and rural development have continued to decline. Whereas allocations from 1966 to 1970 comprised 31.7% of the total, the amounts dropped to 24.9% for 1971-1975, to 26.8% for 1976-1980 and to only 17.5% for 1981-1985.

Instead increasing funds have been made available for urban "modernization" projects. Such "modernization" projects include the Bintulu port (\$332 m); extensions to the Kuching and Miri airports (\$86 m); new airports in Sibul, Bintulu and Miri; new highways; the new Secretariat and Dewan Undangan Negeri complex in Kuching (\$65 m); prestige buildings for the numerous other government agencies and statutory bodies; expansion of telecommunications and the introduction of colour TV transmission (\$162 m for 1976-1985); the Batang Ai (\$600 m) and future Pelagus and Bakun hydroelectricity projects (estimated \$10 - 12 billion).

## SARAWAK

By contrast, allocations for rural health improvement schemes (\$6.9 m for 1976-80), rural electrification (\$30 m for 1981-85), kampung and community development (\$13.2 m for 1981-85), all catering specifically for the rural poor have been meagre.

Meanwhile, the amendments to the Land Code Ordinance in 1974, coupled with the growth of the timber industry over the past decade, have further limited the acreage of land available for natives who practice swidden cultivation.

The Sarawak Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (SALCRA) which was set up in 1976 has attempted to resettle natives, often from different communities, into new, artificial units where they are required to cultivate oil palm and cocoa. Such drastic changes create much hardship for the newly resettled especially since SALCRA has been allocated limited funds (\$14.2 m for 1981-85) and projects have been carried out inefficiently.

Indeed a recent study by a Dutch scholar asserts that because "there is little co-ordination in the approach to rural development between the planning and implementing organizations", many of the rural villages (in this case Bidayuh), "quickly disintegrate when they are incorporated in the market economy and political system of Sarawak. The relationship between households weaken and the responsibility for the welfare of the community decreases." The situation is probably worse in the case of resettled communities.

Increased job opportunities as a result of expansion of the public services has generally been denied to the rural poor, since they do not possess the necessary qualifications. The Bintulu liquified natural gas project costing \$3 billion is extremely capital-intensive. So too the petroleum industry centered around Miri.

Hence employment opportunities are largely available only in the construction industry where unskilled labour is required. And since conditions in the rural areas are deteriorating and employment opportunities lacking, rural youth have migrated to places where roads, ports, airports, prestige complexes and dams are being constructed to search for jobs. Such migration, in turn, hastens the disintegration of rural communities.

It is a sad reflection on our political leadership and on the politics that prevails in Malaysia, that the problems of the majority of the Sarawakians were not commented upon during the last elections. As mentioned earlier, SNAP leaders in 1976 (whether they have later left the party or not) had promised, upon their entry into the BN coalition, that they would continue "to be of service and help to the people of the state particularly those in the rural areas." □

The 1980 Housing and Population Census registered the population of Sarawak as 1,294,753 having grown from 976,269 in 1970.

Iban and Land Dayak accounted for 39.6% of the state's population in 1970, Chinese 30.1%, Malay 18.6% and Melanau 5.5%. The Kayan, Kenyah, Murut, Punan, Bisayah, Kelabit and other smaller indigenous groups accounted for 5.2% of the population.

In 1976, according to the Fourth Malaysia Plan, 1981-85, 84.9% of the heads of poor households were employed in the agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing industries. About 85% of these poor households were in the rural areas.

Under these circumstances it is disheartening that allocations for agriculture and rural development have been progressively reduced since 1971. Instead, increasing amounts have been allocated for urban "modernization" projects like transportation (ports, airports, highways), communications (introduction of TV), energy and public utilities (hydro-electric

projects) and education (tertiary-level), all of which benefit the urban areas more than the rural areas where the large majority of the poor are located.

The result of a development policy that is urban-biased, is unequal growth. This leads to further deterioration of conditions in the rural areas as described in the two adjoining articles on Sarawak.

Population of Sarawak by Ethnic Origin

Peoples	Numbers	Percentage
Malay	181,426	18.6
Melanau	53,379	5.5
Iban	303,461	31.1
Land Dayak	83,612	8.5
Other		
Indigenous	50,696	5.2
Chinese	293,949	30.1
Others	9,746	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>976,269</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Public Development Expenditure in Sarawak 1959-1985

	1959-1963 (est.)		1966-1970 (est.)		1971-1975 (all.)		1976-1980 (all.)		1981-1985 (all.)	
	\$m	%	\$m	%	\$m	%	\$m	%	\$m	%
Agriculture and Rural Development	27.8	17.4	86.7	31.7	151.6	24.9	444.6	26.8	439.9	17.5
Transport	71.5	44.6	80.5	29.4	150.6	24.8	395.9	23.9	795.6	31.6
Communications	5.3	3.3	18.4	6.7	47.2	7.8	75.8	4.6	108.6	4.3
Energy and Public Utilities	11.9	7.4	8.3	3.0	54.0	8.9	158.1	9.5	586.0	23.3
Commerce and Industry	0.4	0.3	2.4	0.9	6.3	1.0	102.8	6.2	88.2	3.5
Social Services	32.1	20.0	53.4	19.5	107.4	17.7	186.9	11.3	379.2	15.1
Administration & Gen.	11.2	7.0	10.0	3.7	39.6	6.5	92.2	5.6	65.8	2.6
Security	--	--	13.8	5.1	51.4	8.4	80.0	4.8	52.1	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>160.2</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>273.5</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>608.1</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,657.0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,515.4</b>	<b>100</b>

## Government Gives A Dam To Long-House Communities

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*Special Correspondent*

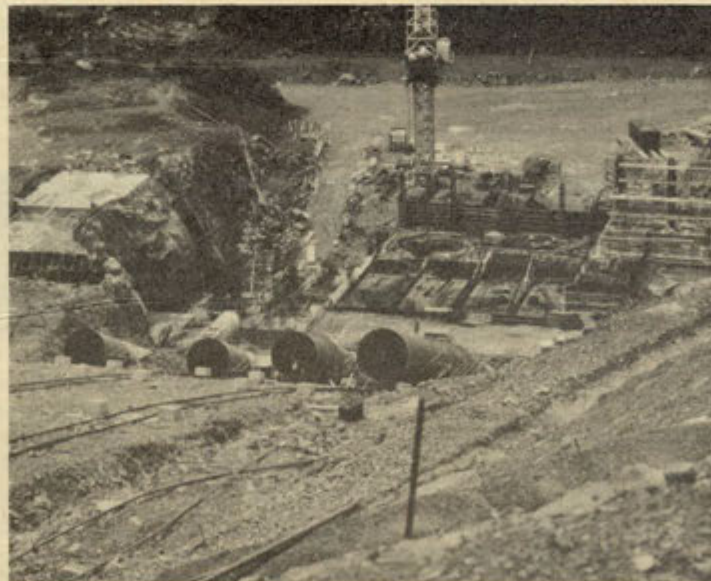
There is a popular myth surrounding the meaning of development. To many people a massive hydro-electricity project, skyscrapers, fancy highways, large-scale industries and supermarkets are commonly associated with development.

But these only represent the physical aspects of economic growth. Development is certainly more than this. It encompasses the satisfaction of basic and social needs, the sharing of economic benefits and achievement of political freedom, all, with the objective of enabling human beings to realise their full potential. Insofar as physical growth does not lead to the realization of these human objectives, it may not be considered as development. Indeed, the construction of such physical structures might, at times, create problems for the people and hinder the development cause.

This is apparent in the case of the Batang Ai Dam wherein the construction of the massive hydro-electricity project has caused the resettlement of an Iban community which in turn has resulted in the destruction of their self-reliance and community spirit.

In June 1981, amidst several speeches and much fanfare, Dato Amar Taib pressed home a switch detonating some explosives on a hillock some 800 metres away. Work on the Batang Ai Dam had begun. Today, the 85-meter high dam which has a crest length of about half a mile, is almost completed. The diversion tunnel will be closed this December to allow the water to accumulate above the dam. Work on the hydroelectric plant is now underway and when fully-operational, probably sometime in 1985, the scheme will be able to generate 92 megawatts. (Sarawak's total consumption of electricity in 1982 was 100 megawatts.)

This \$600 million project is being carried out by Maeda Okumara Joint Venture with machinery and transformers for the power station being supplied by the Mitsui Co. (Japanese) and Area Ab. (Swedish), and with Snowy Mountain Co. of Australia



*Giving A Dam*

as consultants. The major source of funds is the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund of Japan. It has been projected that hydro-electricity from this scheme will save Sarawak \$60 million in oil bills yearly (Borneo Bulletin, 4th Sept. 1982).

This scheme will flood an area of 21,000 acres (i.e. 33 square miles) and displace 21 longhouse communities with a combined population of about 6000. A study conducted by the Sarawak Museum in 1978-79 revealed that these communities were quite

isolated with 80 percent of household heads visiting the nearest town of Lubok Antu once a month or less frequently. (Lubok Antu is not large, comprising of 2 streets and around 25 shophouses).

The study also revealed that subsistence agriculture supplemented by cashcropping (rubber, pepper, etc) was the predominant economic activity. This study reported that 52.3 percent of the people interviewed were unwilling to move and another 14.7 percent were uncertain. Of those who were prepared to move, one-third felt that they had no other option since the government had already decided to implement the project and half felt that their leaders in Kuching were probably acting in their best interest.

We visited Batang Ai in August 1983 and stayed in one of the longhouses that had been resettled. We managed to talk with around 20 people and they were unanimous in their

dislike at being resettled. In their former longhouse, all the necessities of life were free — they grew their own rice, vegetables and fruits; the jungle had an abundance of tubers, fruits and game; fish could be caught in the rivers. Now, they have to buy everything, including rice and the rivers have become muddy and have much less fish than before.

Many felt that they had been tricked.

*"The government promised us free longhouses. But now we are charged \$27,000/- per bilik (each longhouse contains several biliks, each occupied by a family) and have been asked to pay \$127/- monthly. Where are we to go for the money?"*  
*"We were told we would get free electricity. Now they have put up meters in every bilik and they are charging us monthly."*

*"The government promised that each family would be given an 11-acre plot of land fully-planted and ready for cropping. So far, we have only received one acre each and this too is uncultivated."*

*"We were told that these new longhouses would be ready for us when we shifted, but they weren't. We had to squat underneath the longhouses for one month while the workers completed building it."*

We asked the Tuai Rumah whether it was true that they had been promised free longhouses, free electricity and 11 acres of land for each family. He confirmed what the others had said but admitted that they did not have any written agreement regarding all these.

Hasn't any good come out of this shift we asked the people we talked to. Haven't you gained anything at all?

Grudgingly they conceded that now they had newer longhouses and 24-hour electricity supply. The town was nearer and urban facilities, especially clinics and the hospital in Simmangang, were now much more accessible. Also, the government had compensated them for the value of the cash crops they lost as a result of

the shift — each family received between \$25,000 and \$200,000/- depending on how much crops they had. But still, on the whole they felt that they had lost a lot more on being resettled. Several people pointed out to us that many families were spending this compensation money with gay abandon. Almost all the biliks had new settee sets, televisions and cassette recorders. Ten families (out of a total of 50 in that longhouse) had bought cars. Trips to neighbouring towns had become much more common.

The Tuai Rumah himself said to us,

*"What will happen when this money is spent? We now have no land and once the Hydro is finished there won't be so many jobs there. Where will we go for money then?"*

Why did you agree to resettle then we asked the people we talked to.

*"We had no choice. We weren't consulted about the building of the dam. They started building the dam and asked us to move."*

*"We believed too much in the words of our political leaders."*

Several respondents told us of an incident that occurred in the middle of 1982 when several young men donned their traditional clothes and proceeded with swords to the Dam site where they took over the keys of all the machinery and sent their drivers/operators back and so brought work to a halt.

What happened then?

*"The police came and arrested the men. But the purpose was served. They wanted a chance to meet the government officers in charge of the project and they did."*

Oh, are any of these young men here? Could we meet them?

*"Yes, Tedong is." (Someone goes to call Tedong.)*

*"Tedong has gone to work. He is working at Hydro. He has a good job there, gets*

*\$1000/- per month." (All this said with pride.)*

What does Tedong do at the Hydro?

*"It's an easy job. He sits upriver from the dam and looks out for any logs floating down. If a log comes it will be stopped by the floating barrier and he will row out to it and saw it into smaller pieces."*

Does one laugh at their naivety or cry? None of the 3 men engaged in the above exchange seemed aware that in effect their brave and strong Tedong had been bought out. In all probability Tedong himself is also unaware.

Were the people of these resettled longhouses misled, either knowingly or unknowingly, by the authorities concerned? Were free longhouses and free electricity actually promised to them? Were they told that the crops would be ready for harvesting as soon as they moved?

We were unable to find anything in the newspaper reports regarding the above three alleged promises. However an article in the *Borneo Bulletin* of 3rd September, 1983 says that each family will be given 5 acres of rubber, 3 acres of cocoa, 2 acres for padi and one for fruits. Another article in the *Borneo Post* also on 3rd September, 1983, claimed that field work on 414 acres of cocoa for resettled communities commenced in August 1983. When will the rubber be planted? When will the crops be ready for harvesting? Will the rubber and pepper plots for a particular family be near to each other, or would they be separated by two, three or more miles? Would the people be requested to pay back the costs of land development "Felda-style"? These questions were not answered in any of the newspaper articles available.

The culture of a people is a living organic entity with ramifications in every aspect of their lives. It is a major determinant of their sense of self-worth, of their attitudes towards their spouses and children, and of their orientation to their community. Culture has deep roots in the

economic life-style of the community — the types of work done and the relationship with the environment and with other members of the community. Carrying out these types of work play an important role in shaping and maintaining a particular culture. When the economic activities of any particular community changes, the culture too will change — if the rate of change doesn't exceed a certain limit. If the rate of change in life-style is drastic, the culture of that particular community may disintegrate. What will the case be in Batang Ai? Adaptation or fragmentation?

The change from a subsistence economy where money is used only occasionally for the purchase of luxuries to a money economy where most of the produce is for sale and most of the goods consumed is purchased, is a drastic change especially when it takes place over a few months. This change has been compounded by the massive introduction of electrical consumer gadgets and the much easier accessibility of commercialised urban areas. If the resettlement area is developed in blocks delineated by land-use, the farming of different plots of estate-type land, each distantly-separated from the others, would further complicate matters for a community engaged in shifting cultivation and hunting for centuries. These changes in life-style would definitely result in a "culture shock" but there is a chance that the culture will be able to adapt itself and sustain the community.

It appears to us that what will happen will probably be worse than the above. The delays in implementing the agriculture schemes, coupled with the fact they would have to repay SALCRA (Sarawak Land Consolidation & Rehabilitation Authority) and the possibility of their various plots being scattered about, will probably cause a significant portion of the families to migrate to urban areas to secure a livelihood. They will end up as construction labourers or contract workers in the service sectors of

Bintulu, Sibu and Kuching. As urban-centred development will push up land prices, the migrant Ibans may have to stay in cramped squatter communities without proper sanitary facilities. This rate of change might lead to the process of cultural disintegration we mentioned earlier. The Iban propensity to alcohol consumption will increase to pathological levels and problems such as drug abuse and gang violence, now almost unknown amongst them, will probably make their appearance in the squatter zones of Sarawak's towns within the next ten to fifteen years.

Is there any other alternative? No one would deny that there is poverty and malnutrition amongst the indigenous peoples of Sarawak. Neither would anyone propose

that the nation leaves the indigenous peoples alone to their development. The issue is how we should help them, and, is our involvement with them motivated primarily by a desire to genuinely help them, or because we covet the considerable timber and hydroelectric potential of the regions that they inhabit? Is the solution their abandonment of their economic activities and adaptation of ours — *viz.* Fel-da-type schemes and wage-labour in urban areas? Or should we try to adapt relevant parts of our technical and scientific knowledge to upgrade their economic activities through introduction of appropriate technologies, and strengthen their marketing position through encouraging cooperatives. If the second approach is chosen, one would

need to re-examine the approach of every institution — for example, is the syllabus that is deemed appropriate for kids in PJ, Ipoh and Kuching of relevance for Iban students in Lubok Antu and the Kenyahs in Marudi? Or should a more "appropriate" syllabus be fashioned? None of this is straightforward, but whoever said that development is simple?

Sadly however, alternatives will not even be considered. Politicians will continue in seeing the wisdom in sacrificing the interests of a few thousands in the interest of "The Nation" — especially when their vision is enhanced by the opportunities to get rich quick themselves as long as they don't rock the development boat. The educated people of Sarawak including

those among the indigenous peoples who are educated are complacent in their comfortable suburban homes. They are a group which can conceptualise and articulate the genuine grievances of the indigenous peoples. But videos, the latest car models and their children's education are their major priorities, not "abstract" questions like what will happen to the communities displaced by the Hydro schemes of Batang Ai. In all probability, therefore, the Ibans and their Kayan, Kenyah and Bidayuh brothers, will get displaced, relocated, traumatised and ultimately squatterised. And within the next ten years we journalists with a sociological bent will have plenty of field material for comparative studies with the situation of the American Indians.

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# Of 10th Anniversaries And The Malaysian Environment

1984 marks a number of 10th anniversaries of special relevance to the Malaysian environment. These include the enactments of the Environmental Quality Act (EQA) and the Pesticides Act as well as the establishment of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur (KL) and the Environmental Protection Society Malaysia (EPSM). Activities are being organised to mark these various anniversaries. We hope that while evaluation of the last 10 years are carried out, greater emphasis should go towards making the next decade more progressive at least from the environmental angle.

The EQA has not been an unqualified success. This does not imply that it has been useless either. But many of its provisions like that dealing with the imposition of the Environmental Quality Council and the penalties for pollution, have been inadequate — no indigenous groups are represented on the council and few magistrates have been

moved to invoke the maximum penalties. The Director-General of Environment has not adequately discharged his duties especially that on the mandatory publication of Annual Reports. He has also not delegated any of his powers to local authority officials.

The Pesticides Act has been implemented only slowly, and the Pesticide Board has only functioned usefully in the last few years. The majority of the public are still ignorant of the range of pesticides which may be used without endangering the users health. Pesticide abuse still continues especially in the agricultural sector and the spectre of dioxin poisoning has arisen. We believe that the dissemination of pesticide information and public education on uses/abuses is long overdue. The Pesticide Board and pesticide distributors have to be made accountable to the public.

In the case of KL, there have been some environmental improvements

especially in terms of increase in greenery. But overall there has been a deterioration in environmental quality especially in the mushrooming of high-rise buildings, a tremendous increase in the volume of traffic, and bottlenecks in drainage maintenance and refuse collection.

In the case of EPSM, the last 10 years have been somewhat uneven. We have had some achievements but have also faced some problems, not least among which have been poor financial and moral support. We are conducting an evaluation and hope that we can overcome most of our problems. We hope to be more effective in our investigations, campaigns and representations.

We hope that the next decade will see greater public awareness of environmental issues and more effective action to curb pollution.

EPSM

# BUAT APA SENI?

Suara Kemanusiaan Seorang Pengarang

**M**aafkanlah kalau saya memulakan ucapan malam ini dengan memperkatakan diri sendiri dalam hubungan dengan penghormatan yang saya terima. Sopan santun dan budi bahasa Melayu mengajarkan supaya saya tidak menyebut-nyebut diri sendiri di khalayak ramai.

Tapi jika saya menyebutnya saya dianggap pongah dan 'kurang ajar', maka saya terima dengan senyum, sebab saya kira kita sekarang ini berada dalam zaman bersejarah yang menuntut supaya kita sesekali menjadi 'kurang ajar'.

Suatu bangsa tidak menjadi besar

Ucapan Saudara Usman Awang  
Sempena Penerimaan Anugerah  
Sastera Negara Di Dewan  
Bankuet, Bangunan Parlimen,  
Pada 7 Disember 1983.

## Benarkah Ketam Mengajar Anaknya Berjalan Betul?

Sebenarnya Sang Ketam tidak pernah menyuruh dan mengajar anaknya berjalan betul kerana Sang Ketam cukup yakin bahawa caranya berjalan, sebagaimana cara nenek moyang kepada nenek moyangnya, dan cucu cicit kepada cucu cicitnya berjalan, telah betul dan sempurna. Sebaliknya bangsa Ketam pulalah yang merasa hairan dan takjub melihat manusia itu sendiri yang tidak habis-habis, malah bertambah-tambah dengan ajaran dan peraturan yang pelbagai macam, dari doktrin-doktrin, rukun-rukun, fatwa-fatwa sampailah kepada akta-akta, pekeliling-pekeliling dan memo-memo. Manusia telah menghabiskan waktunya untuk membuat segala macam peraturan dan mengawasi pelaksanaan peraturan-peraturan; dari peraturan lalulintas jalan raya; peraturan datang ke pejabat dan peraturan berpakaian, sampailah kepada peraturan-peraturan bercakap di Parlimen dan di Mahkamah, peraturan menyekatkan air dan menggunakan elektrik, serta peraturan menyimpan rambut di kepala bagi kepala yang berambut. Kehairanan Sang Ketam itu kian bertambah bila melihat manusia yang tidak pernah berjalan betul itu menghabiskan waktunya dengan mendandan mukanya, memelihara rambutnya, mengenakan pakaiannya, malah lebih aneh menahan makan dan minum untuk menguruskan badan, menelan kapsul dan jamumakjun untuk memperkuat bahagian-bahagian anggota tubuhnya, mengumpulkan harta dan ringgit, menentukan jenis darah dan keturunan serta status dan gelaran, malah sangat teliti mencukur bulunya di samping berkelahi dan berbunuhan, menindas dan menipu sesamanya. Soalnya di sini, siapakah sebenarnya yang mengajar dan menyuruh anaknya berjalan betul, Ketam atau Manusia?

tanpa sikap 'kurang ajar'.

Beberapa bulan lalu, ketika Universiti Malaya menganugerahi saya ijazah kehormat Doktor Persuratan, saya berasa takjub dengan kehormatan mulia yang tidak termimpikan itu, sehingga berasa diri terapung dijulung awan.

Bayangkanlah betapa gugup dan gundahnya hati seorang yang tahap persekolahan dan pendidikannya seperti saya, apabila ia berdiri dan berucap di sebuah menara gading, di tengah para sarjana, para profesor dan tamu-tamu terhormat ketika menerima ijazah mulia itu.

Dan pada malam bersejarah yang gilang-gemilang ini, saya berdiri pula di bangunan bertuah tempat perlembagaan negara menerima daulat rakyat, di tenggah-tengah orang kenamaan, para cerdik pandai, para diplomat dan para penulis ternama untuk menerima satu anugerah lagi.

Demikianlah di peringkat usia setengah abad ini saya dikejutkan oleh berbagai-bagai penghormatan yang bagaikan tiba-tiba bertimpa datangnya. Timbul pertanyaan aneh. Adakah saya melakukan sesuatu kesalahan, atau barangkali sesuatu kesilapan? Tidakkah lagi saya pembicara bagi golongan miskin dan tertindas? Adakah ini tanda kelumpuhan saya? Atau, mungkinkah kerana saya mengalami masalah darah tinggi dan masalah jantung, maka sesuatu harus diberikan kepada saya sebelum darah berhenti mengalir dan jantung tidak lagi berdegup?

Tetapi setelah meneliti siaran-siaran akhbar dan tv serta kenyataan Pengerusi Panel Anugerah Sastera yang menekankan bahawa Anugerah Sastera ini bersangkutan juga dengan perjuangan menentang kezaliman, ketidakadilan dan kemiskinan, di samping ciri-ciri kemanusiaan, maka saya mula percaya bahawa di kalangan mereka yang kaya dan berkuasa pun ter-

dapat juga yang menyokong and merasakan kemarahan yang sama terhadap kezaliman, ketidakadilan dan kemiskinan. Masalah ini bukan saja menghalang kemajuan sesebuah negara, tetapi juga mencacatkan kehijauan alam tanahair, keindahan pantai dan pulau-pulau serta menyumbingkan keriang tawa anak-anak tercinta kita.

Saya berasa lebih bahagia bahawa anugerah sastera ini diberikan ketika negara sedang bergerak ke depan, mengorak langkah melaksanakan sebahagian daripada impian yang pernah saya suarakan sepanjang usia karya saya.

Di negeri kita ini masih ada mereka yang menegakkan diri sebagai manusia

yang menggelombangi jalan sejarah kita.

Rakyat sudah mula bersuara lantang dan untuk pertama kali berhujah secara terbuka sejak kemerdekaan. Bersinarlah harapan bahawa rakyat biasa akan mula mendapat keadilan sosial, bertentangan dengan keistimewaan yang wujud sekarang, yang hanya bagi golongan kaya dan istimewa.

Harapan saya kini ialah agar tenaga baru dan suasana baru dalam negeri ini akan ditujukan kepada masalah-masalah besar seperti kemiskinan. Sungguh menyedihkan bahawa dalam sebuah negara yang kaya-roya hasil buminya, rakyatnya kaya dengan kemiskinan. Sungguh menyedihkan bahawa kawasan luar

Sayangnya, sebahagian daripada penulis kita tidak begitu sensitif terhadap kenyataan-kenyataan yang wujud di tengah-tengah kehidupan masyarakatnya. Sastera haruslah meliputi semua aspek kehidupan manusia secara luas. Dalam zaman pembangunan ini nelayan tidak lagi berkolek berpayang, tetapi telah berkenalan dengan alat-alat moden menangkap ikan, dengan motor berenjin dan sebagainya. Tetapi adakah jiwa mereka tidak lagi berombak, dan kehidupan keluarga mereka tidak lagi berkocak?

Para buruh semakin banyak, kerana kita bukan saja memandangi ke Barat tetapi juga memandangi ke Timur. Beratus-ratus kilang moden telah didiri-

### Anak Jiran Tionghua

*Begitu kecil ia berdiri di tepi pagar  
kilat matanya memanggil Iskandar  
siapa lalu siapa berkaca  
melihat keduanya bergurau senda.*

*Anak Tionghua kelahirannya di sini  
di bumi hijau ladang-ladang getah dan padi  
ia bisa bercerita untuk siapa saja  
di sini tanahnya dan ibunya bersemadi.*

*Lihat mereka sedang berebutan pistol mainan  
he, jangan berkelahi  
ah, anak-anak dengan caranya murni  
berkelahi untuk nanti bermain kembali.*

*Lihat mereka tertawa riang  
Ah Chew tak punya gigi sebatang  
Iskandar mengesat hingus ke baju  
sekarang mereka menunggu aiskrim lalu.*

*Bumi tercinta resapkan wahyumu  
jantung mereka adalah langitmu  
darah mereka adalah sungaimu  
nafas mereka adalah udaramu.*

1962

### 500 Mereka

*(kepada Siti Nor Hamid Tuah)*

*Lima ratus mereka  
mara! mara mencium hutan dara  
lima ratus mereka  
kapak di tangan parang di pinggang  
hutan dara mereka rebahkan.*

*Lima ratus mereka  
petani miskin rakyat tertindas  
kini bangkit dengan tenaga perkasa  
dengan berani mengambil milik sendiri.*

*Lima ratus mereka  
tajam-tajam tangan undang-undang  
tiada gentar ditangkap tiada gentar dipenjara  
petani berani pahlawan rakyat tercinta.*

1969

istimewa, terus-menerus di atas dari segala orang lain, dan senantiasa pula hidup dalam kemewahan dan kepura-puraan. Seperti yang kita ketahui, mengikut Islam hanya Allah sajalah yang sempurna dan yang kekal, manusia semuanya sama di sisi-Nya, dan hanya kepada-Nya kita sujud. Saya memanjatkan doa kepada Allah, semoga masanya akan sampai manakala kita tidak lagi akan melihat keistimewaan yang tidak adil.

Ada terasa semacam perubahan yang berlaku di negara kita sekarang ini. Ada terasa hembusan angin segar yang nyaman bertiup menerbangkan debu dan puing-puing usang. Ada terasa cuaca baru dari kepak sinar matahari pagi yang cerah

Dan ada terasa deburan ombak

bandar masih mundur, sekolah-sekolah serba kekurangan, murid-murid serba ketiadaan dan perubatan serta doktor tidak berkecukupan. Sungguh menyedihkan bahawa kanak-kanak miskin masih banyak yang cicir dalam pelajaran, dan alangkah pilunya hati apabila hanya sebilangan kecil saja kanak-kanak perempuan yang dapat mengembangkan kebolehan mereka sepenuhnya dalam segala bidang pendidikan.

Bolehkah kita semua bersama-sama mengatasi segala masalah ini? Dan tidak kurang dari semua ini, saya bermohon menyuarkan harapan agar korupsi, pilih kasih dan segala penyelewengan — dalam bentuk apa pun — yang menjadi beban serta merugikan rakyat dapat dihapuskan.

kan, berpuluh-puluh bangunan pencakar langit ditegakkan. Bagaimanakah kehidupan mereka, sedu-duka, harapan dan impian mereka?

Ladang-ladang semakin banyak dan luas dibuka. Pelbagai nama institusi tani dan ladang berdiri di luar bandar. Bagaimanakah isi hati, keringat dan suara batin para petani pada zaman pembangunan?

Segala ini masih kabur dan sayup-sayup dalam pengucapan sastera kita, padahal merekalah golongan terbanyak dalam masyarakat kita. Sudahkah wujud keadilan sosial bagi golongan ini? Adakah suasana baru sekarang menyalakan harapan baru pula kepada mereka?

*Continued on Page 21*

# KO-TAI

## Theatre In The Streets

### Tan Sooi Beng

*Ko-tai* literally translated as "song-stage" in Hokkien consists of a modern open-air stage featuring both Chinese and Western popular songs and comic sketches. It is performed during religious festivals to celebrate the birthday of Chinese deities.

The *ko-tai* was introduced in the 60's to draw young people, particularly those who could not identify with Chinese operas, to religious festivals. In Penang the *ko-tai* is performed almost once every month. During the peak seasons of the 7th and 8th lunar months, there are 5 to 6 performances a day.

Even though *ko-tai* performances are founded on religious festivals, the content of comic sketches and songs is far from sacred. The majority of the older generation in fact see the *ko-tai* as a crude and meaningless source of amusement, a mere adjunct to the festival; in their own words, "a lot of shouting, joking and jumping around on stage".

This is however not so to the lower working-class youths. For them, the *ko-tai* has become an important form of entertainment. Its combination of popular songs, slapstick and sketches which are closely related to contemporary social reality has great appeal.



*Ko-Tai In Progress*

Not surprisingly, comic sketches are the highlights of the performances. Their popularity is directly related to their content which by and large are issues, concerns and problems relevant to the lower-class Chinese audience. These include (a) social ills in the city (b) conflict between the young and the old and (c) stratification and social mobility.

### SOCIAL ILLS

Among the social ills portrayed are crime, gangsterism, gambling and drugs. Stories like the *ko-tai* skit described below are common.

*X gambles a lot. He arrives at work late and is fired. He goes home and his wife divorces him because he is a "good for nothing". Thugs come in and beat him up because he cannot pay his debts. He steals but gets caught in the process.*

However, as the *ko-tai* is didactic and tries to impart morals and standards of behaviour to the younger generation, we now see,

*X released from jail dressed in rags and carrying a mat (his bed) in his hands. He tells the crowd his story. "It is my own fault that I'm a beggar. I gambled too much". Then*

*he tells the audience that they should "get a job and work hard and not gamble like I did".*

### CONFLICT BETWEEN THE YOUNGER AND OLDER GENERATION

In addition to portraying social problems in the city, *ko-tai* sketches also bring into prominence the conflict between the younger and older generation. The city is a place where the young wear western dress, use modern appliances, speak English or Mandarin more than their local dialects and practice "modern ways". In contrast, the older people who grew up in a different environment, at a different period of time, still cling to their traditional values.

Arrogant youngsters, who often reject their parents' values, speak rudely to their parents, flirt with women and are lazy, always end up in trouble because they do not listen to their parents.

Even though skits portray parents as "old-fashioned" and not understanding the modern ways of the city, the *ko-tai* seems to be subtly telling the audience that the older generation having "eaten more salt" know what is best for the children.

In addition to telling children that they should obey their parents, *ko-tai* sketches also try to tell the audience to love, respect and care for their elders come what may. A typical scene conveying this message goes as follows:

*A rich businessman flies home from business abroad, planning to test his children's love for him. When he approaches them in rags, pretending he has lost all his money, they reject him. However, when he tells them the truth, all of them kneel to ask for forgiveness. But the father kicks them and gives them (indirectly to the audience) a lecture about the proper way to treat parents.*

## SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

A third aspect of the *ko-tai* includes commentary on social stratification within the Chinese community and the lack of mobility for the lower classes.

*Ko-tai* elites dress elaborately, speak Mandarin instead of the local dialect and do not use four-letter words. On the other hand, lower-class characters always dress crudely, speak the local dialect and use foul language.

The *ko-tai* appears to extol elite values and to encourage aspirations towards elite status through hard work, education and through marrying across class lines. However, the *ko-tai* brings out the social reality that these are difficult to achieve. Poor families often cannot afford to send their children for tertiary education. In fact many of the young have to quit school and start work at a tender age in order to supplement the family income. Education, particularly secondary school education, is still a privilege reserved for a minority. Thus, in most *ko-tai* sketches, attempts by the lower class to marry across class lines are shown to end disastrously. Members of the lower class who strive for acceptance as elites do not make it. They are seldom given opportunities to study and marriage across class lines is often unacceptable.

## WHY IS THE KO-TAI SO POPULAR?

The first reason for this is the content of the *ko-tai*. The skits portray problems, issues and concerns of the younger generation. The young can also relate to the popular songs rendered.

In addition to its appeal through content, the *ko-tai* also attracts large crowds through its improvisatory nature which enables the audience to participate in the performance. The audience is often asked questions and they respond by shouting back answers. Sometimes, *ko-tai* performers even go to the extent of asking

the audience to donate money to a good cause. When this happens, the crowd throw coins and dollar notes onto the stage. Children then climb up onto the stage to help the performers pick up the money.

A third reason why the *ko-tai* draws crowds is that the audience is able to laugh off and vent its frustration with the authorities, the system and with family life. Policemen and lawmen who are corrupt and inefficient are usually made fun of in the sketches. In the scenario outlined below, the police officers are depicted as slow and inefficient in performing their duties, and also morally questionable:

*A death has occurred on the road. A police inspector and two constables (clownish characters) arrive on the scene. The inspector gives orders to the constables to get down to work. One telephones the coffin shop. Then the other telephones the local whore-house to ask for a woman for the inspector. The following conversation ensues:*

*Constable: The owner of the whore-house says that the last time you went 'to do business' with them, you owed them \$3....*

*Inspector: Who asked you to telephone them?*

*Constable: I noticed that you were troubled, so I called for a woman to help you relax.... But she inquired as to when you were going to pay her the \$3 you still owed....*

*Inspector: \$3? I'm not returning her the money!*

A man is found dead but the two constables (comedians) take a long time in deciding what to do. In the process, the two constables expose the vice of the inspector. He is a womaniser and frequents the whore-house, even owing them money.

Further on in the sketch, the constables call for a police car to take the wife of the deceased home, but the car has broken down and is unavailable. The crowd bursts out laughing as this is just the sort of thing they expect from the authorities. From their experience, they know that if there is an accident, they would have to wait for hours before the police arrive on the scene.

Another stereotype used on stage is to illustrate how within the government, higher officials are often more morally corrupt than lower officials. For instance, in the same sketch, when one of the constables starts stroking the weeping

woman, the inspector shouts "Stop! We earn and spend the government's money, we have to be faithful to the government - when we are working we cannot be 5-8-4 (In Hokkien, 5-8-4 means lecherous)." But then, the inspector himself goes over to stroke her. When the private asks him why his hand is hovering around the woman, he answers "I am an inspector, you are not". Apparently, what is not permissible for the rank and file seems to be permissible for the officers! It is the rank and file who are caught for misbehaviour in the end.

Aside from jests on the authorities, *ko-tai* performers often create banter about "old-fashioned" fathers and mothers as well. Children in the sketches ridicule the manner and ways of their old folks even though they are told to respect and listen to their old folks. *Ko-tai* sketches often depict serious scenes like fathers scolding their sons for being careless and unloving and then turn the scenes into comic ones. For example, as the father is reprimanding the son, his walking stick suddenly breaks and he falls. Sometimes, he drops his spectacles in the midst of shouting and has to grope about. Tense situations between the young and their parents are turned into funny, light-hearted episodes. The audience is thus able to laugh off their frustrations with their families through these episodes.

A last reason why the *ko-tai* is popular is that it is sensitive to the changing tastes of the audience. It is constantly experimenting with new ideas to attract larger audiences. The content is flexible, and sketches and songs presented change according to the fashion of the day. Presently, to cater for a wider range of audience (particularly to attract the older opera audience) and to draw the *ko-tai* away from mere "singing and joking", some of the *ko-tai* troupes in Penang have introduced "modernized" Chinese opera. In these presentations, *ko-tai* actors retain certain Chinese opera elements as well while introducing new techniques of singing and musical accompaniment. For example, opera tunes are sung to the accompaniment of the western *ko-tai* bands, using harmony based on the western diatonic scale. Modern popular songs never used before in the traditional opera performances are often included.

## THE KO-TAI: A PEOPLE'S THEATRE FORM?

In some aspects, the *ko-tai* offers for many people an alternative to the institutionalized theatre performed by professionals, and consumed passively by the well-educated.

Sketches are improvisatory in nature. There is no script. Members of the

audience who have never been involved in theatre are invited to participate. Sketches are simple and contemporary in nature so that the less-educated lower class can understand. The sketches also do not need elaborate props, costumes or special settings — thus allowing them to be performed economically and quite readily. The *ko-tai* is performed in parks, compounds, vacant lots, fields, in open spaces surrounded by homes and therefore attendance is convenient. The audience can relax — walk in and out as they wish, eat, chit-chat and socialize with one another. For many, it is a family outing.

However, although the *ko-tai* serves as an outlet for the younger generation to laugh off their tensions and frustrations, and the skits try to impart morals and standards of behaviour, there is little discussion of the issues presented. The sketches do not question why the social ills, conflicts, corruption and inefficiencies of the authorities arise. The sketches also do not offer solutions.

At times, ethnic and racial jokes which reinforce stereotype prejudices are included. While it is understandable that jokes help to lighten otherwise conflict-prone situations and help to turn tense social confrontations into amusing ones, they do not help to solve the communal problems but in fact make people even more ethnic in their attitudes.

Lastly although songs which talk about life in the cities and which lament the rigours of work are sometimes sung, by and large, the majority of the songs presented are commercial rock songs from Hong Kong and Taiwan, or local adaptations of western rock hits heard over the radio. These songs may entertain, soothe or thrill the audience but they do not touch on the social reality, nor do they help to stir people to seek change for a better society.

In order to make the *ko-tai* more meaningful and effective as an agent for raising consciousness there is a need to promote sketches and songs which reflect the concerns, needs and problems of Malaysian society as a whole. Why conflicts and social ills arise in society should be discussed. In this way, ethnic misinterpretations may hopefully be challenged.

Lastly, the *ko-tai* should encourage more dialogue in Malay (even if it is *pasar Malay*) so that other non-Chinese members of the community living nearby may understand and participate in this theatre of the people.

Should more Malay and Indian songs and dances be included in the performances, the *ko-tai* may be able to contribute towards the emergence of a genuine Malaysian peoples' culture. □

## BUAT APA SENI?

*Continued from page 18*

Ketika mula-mula menulis dulu, saya dan teman-teman tidak pernah memikirkan pengiktirafan, apalagi penghormatan anugerah. Kami hidup di bawah ancaman kuasa penjajah dan menggunakan bahasa anak jajah. Bahasa itu kami ungkapkan sebagai alat yang menjuarai perjuangan rakyat, membahangi semangat penentangan terhadap penjajah. Pada masa itu tidak banyak yang bersedia bersama-sama sebaris dengan kami.

Kami belajar berani untuk mendapatkan keberanian seorang penulis.

Penggunaan bahasa bangsa yang terjajah, iaitu bahasa Melayu, dipandang rendah. Malah ada kehinaan yang dipalitkan ke wajahnya. Bahasa itu hanya untuk budak pejabat, polis dan tentera serta orang kampung. Bahasa itu digunakan hanya oleh tuan kepada hamba. Di universiti pun pada masa itu banyak pelajar Melayu sendiri yang tidak yakin bahawa bahasa itu dapat menjadi bahasa bersama untuk semua golongan rakyat. Dan anehnya, terdapat pula sebahagian bukan Melayu yang berbicara tentang peranan bahasa Melayu sebagai alat perpaduan untuk menyatukan semua golongan kaum.

Melalui beberapa perjuangan, bahasa itu telah dinobatkan menjadi bahasa kebangsaan yang berdaulat.

Sekarang ini apabila bercakap tentang bahasa Malaysia, saya berasa pilu dan kecewa melihat bahasa ibunda yang indah dan halus itu dipertikaikan pula dari segi kepentingan politik parti. Selagi bahasa Malaysia tidak menjadi milik bersama dan dicintai bersama, dan memberikan kemudahan serta faedah bersama untuk semua kaum, maka selama itulah pula bahasa Malaysia tidak akan menjadi alat perpaduan, dan tanpa perpaduan yang tulen negara kita akan lemah dan miskin.

Suatu bahasa dan suatu budaya bersama akan berkembang dari pengucapan, harapan dan cita-cita bersama, dan tidak mungkin lahir dari berbagai-bagai agitasi politik atau dekri para birokrat.

Tidak ada sesiapa pun yang boleh mendakwa bahawa ia mempunyai monopoli terhadap budaya Malaysia. Budaya bersama kita hanya akan lahir dari penghidupan bersama semua rakyat, dan bukan dari contoh angkuh dari sebilangan kecil golongan kaya dan istimewa.

Saya bukanlah pakar yang layak memberikan nasihat tentang cara mengatasi apa-apa masalah. Saya hanya seorang insan yang bersyukur kepada Allah kerana memberkati saya kebolehan menggunakan bahasa yang saya anggap paling indah di dunia. Saya telah mencuba menggunakannya untuk men-

yuarkan hati nurani saya yang saya percaya adalah juga hati nurani masyarakat, maka dalam penyuaran itu saya tidak membatasi golongan kaum, bangsa, kepercayaan dan warna kulit. Telah berulang-ulang saya nyatakan bahawa teriakan seorang anak penjual kue teow di Petaling Street tidak ada bezanya dengan teriakan seorang anak penjual nasi lemak di Kawasan Melayu Petaling Jaya atau di Kampung Baharu, Kuala Lumpur yang tidak juga berbeza daripada suara seorang anak penjual tose di Jalan Brickfield.

Begitu jugalah duka lara Pak Ngah Ali dan Pok Nil, pesawah serta nelayan di Pantai Timur, dengan derita pedih Ah Kau atau Ah Lim pekerja lombong di Lembah Kinta, atau pembina bangunan perpuluh-puluh tingkat di ibu kota, yang tidak berbeza dengan pilu rawan Ramasamy atau Kandaya yang membina jalan raya atau menoreh getah di ladang.

Saya kira inilah suara kemanusiaan dan makna yang sebanyak sedikitnya mendasari pembinaan sastera Malaysia. Untuk ini para para penulis semua kaum di Malaysia haruslah terlebih dahulu memecahkan tembok perkauman masing-masing. Dan dari sinilah udara baru akan berhembus dan bunga sastera Malaysia akan menguntum dengan kelopak seribu satu warna.

Saya telah diberitahu tentang had waktu berucap malam ini dan maafkanlah, kerana waktu itu nampaknya telah terlebih dari hadnya.

Akhir sekali pada saat bersejarah malam anugerah ini saya ingin melafazkan penghargaan dan terima kasih yang sedalam-dalamnya kepada mereka yang menjadi sumber ilham saya, iaitu golongan rakyat terbanyak, para petani, buruh dan nelayan. Gerak nadi merekalah, harapan dan impian merekalah, dan budi serta kasih sayang merekalah yang menyentuh daya rasa dan daya haru saya, dan yang dengan keredaan Allah telah mendorong saya menulis sehingga dipercayai untuk menerima anugerah tertinggi negara dalam bidang kesusasteraan.

Dengan tulus ikhlas saya mengucapkan terima kasih kepada Pengerusi Panel Anugerah Sastera, Y.A.B. Datuk Musa Hitam yang meskipun sangat sibuk dengan tugas-tugas negara, masih tetap berminat dan memberikan waktunya yang berharga untuk bidang sastera. Kepada setiap anggota panel Anugerah Sastera Negara dengan rendah hati saya menyampaikan terima kasih yang hangat atas kepercayaan anugerah mulia kepada saya. Terima kasih saya kepada Prof. Dr. Muhammad Haji Salleh yang mengucapkan pidato penganugerahan yang sangat mengharukan hati.

Segala penghormatan, budi dan kasih sayang akan selamanya terjunjung di jemala hati, terpahat menjadi kenangan sepanjang hayat sepanjang zaman. □

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# Current Comments

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Aliran's Statements To The Press Made During The Preceding Month.

## Seminary Grounds Campaign

Aliran gives full support to the objection raised by residents of Pulau Tikus to the proposed conversion of the College General Seminary grounds from its present religious/institutional status to commercial/residential use. The signature campaign that the objectors have organised is closely related to two principal aspects of Aliran's own struggle — **one**, our concern about the nature of development taking place in the country and **two**, our commitment to widening the scope for popular participation in public policy-making.

It is obvious that developing the seminary grounds into a commercial complex will not benefit the local community in Pulau Tikus or help to improve the economic position of the majority of people in the state of Penang. On the contrary, it will mean that the grounds cannot be used for public purposes such as a public library, community centre or children's park.

It is only right that land given to the church for charitable purposes in the past should now be returned to the people so that it can be used in the public interest. Besides, the sort of commercial development that is envisaged will weaken the existing commercial network in Pulau Tikus, change the residential character of the place, increase traffic problems and erode the historical and architectural significance of the area.

By objecting to the conversion of the seminary grounds for commercial use, the socially-conscious residents of Pulau Tikus are in fact protesting against the type of development that allows a wealthy and influential elite to direct and control the growth of the nation.

Similarly, the signature campaign initiated by the Pulau Tikus residents is an important dimension of the struggle to strengthen the democratic process. For through the campaign people will become more conscious of their right to participate in the formulation of public policy. They will realise that in a genuine democracy the ordinary masses should be consulted in all matters that affect their interests.

Aliran hopes that in the interest of people-oriented development and people-based democracy the signature campaign of the socially-conscious Pulau Tikus residents will succeed.

*Rajendran Devaraj,*  
12th January, 1984 *Exco Member.*

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## The Importance Of A Separate Judicial Service

The question of bias that has risen in relation to the discharge of duties of magistrates, Session Court Presidents and other judicial officers in the subordinate courts can be overcome only if the legal and judicial services are separated.

The legal service should be part of the civil service doing all the legal work for the Executive. The Attorney General should be responsible only for the legal service. He should not have anything to do with the judicial service. In fact, the executive should have no say at all in the running of courts and their staff. The courts and their staff should be the sole responsibility of the head of the judiciary.

For this to be effective the judicial service should become a separate and autonomous service whose status is enshrined in the constitution. This requires a change to the judicial and legal service Commission as presently provided for in the Constitution. It should henceforth be the Judicial Service Commission.

The judicial service should have full powers to recruit, emplace, promote and dismiss its own personnel — without having to refer any matter to the Attorney General or the executive. This means the judicial service should have its own administrative staff and its own fund which it will control and utilise.

This separation of the judicial service from the legal service is vital to ensure that the judiciary is truly autonomous and independent. The judiciary cannot be said to be independent as long as the subordinate courts and their officers are under the Attorney-General for it is in the subordinate courts that the bulk of judicial work is done.

Aliran hopes that lawyers and judicial officers in the subordinate courts will be supported by judges and the general public in fighting for the separation of the judicial service from the legal service. It is a fight that must succeed if we want to ensure that justice is done in the court houses of the land.

*Chandra Muzaffar,*  
14th January, 1984 *President*

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## Reduction In Defence Expenditure

Aliran welcomes the announcement by our Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir that we shall not be purchasing the expensive American F-16 jet fighters.

### Aliran's Latest Book

Our latest publication is a booklet on Thean Teik.

The seemingly isolated incident of Thean Teik focusses attention on one of the major challenges confronting Malaysian society — the need for people-oriented development.

"*Thean Teik: The Other Side Of Development*", discusses the history of the community, the relationship between landlord and development, the enforcement of the law, the question of rights and compensation and events leading to the death of a Thean Teik resident.

The booklet is the collaborative effort of a group of individuals including an Aliran Exco member. While the initiative for this effort began outside Aliran, the views expressed in the booklet are in harmony with Aliran's own understanding of development and we took a decision to publish the booklet.

The booklet which is priced at \$3.00 is available at major book stores in the country. The booklet can also be obtained by writing to us at P.O. Box 1049, Pulau Pinang.

Purchasing military hardware particularly from a superpower could lead us into undesired dependence on it for our defence. This decision by the Premier is especially appropriate in view of the fact that our national budget is in serious deficit (an estimated \$9.8 billion in 1983) and our external debts are rapidly mounting (an estimated \$20 billion by the end of 1984). More important our poverty level, by official admission has increased to 42.8 percent in the last 2 or 3 years.

With this decision, Aliran hopes that the government will further cut down on defence spendings and re-allocate a greater amount of funds for social services, agricultural development and the rural and urban poor.

And while we in Aliran do not suggest that we should abandon our defences, nevertheless, we believe that the best defence is to be provided by a united nation. Such unity will emerge if socio-economic benefits are shared justly, communal politics got rid of, and the people given the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the affairs of government.

*Gan Kong Hwee,  
Exco Member.*

17th January, 1984

## Action Against Student Critics Abroad

Aliran deplors the statement by Deputy Education Minister, Datuk Khalil Yaacob, that action would be taken against Malaysian students abroad who criticise government policies.

If certain government policies are unjust or unfair it is only right and proper that students abroad — like Malaysians anywhere — criticise them in a rational and responsible manner. By criticising wrong policies, students would in fact be helping the government to correct its own shortcomings. In this way, the nation as a whole will benefit. Criticism should therefore be seen as service to the people. It is, in a sense, an act of patriotism.

As a case in point, wouldn't it be in the interest of the rakyat, if students pointed out the weaknesses in the government's poverty redressal programmes especially since poverty has become more serious in recent years? Wouldn't it be to the public's advantage if students expressed their concern about corruption and mismanagement, especially in the light of scandals like BMF? Isn't it legitimate for students to criticise the erosion of democratic rights especially since it is such an obvious trend? Aren't students being responsible if they voice their misgivings about government

policies that have caused ethnic polarization?

Of course, in criticising government policies, students may sometimes err. In such circumstances, it is up to the government to rectify distortions and misinterpretations that may have occurred. This is what one expects our embassies abroad to do.

Taking action against student critics is not going to do the government any good. If anything it will further tarnish the government's image abroad, particularly in the liberal democracies of the West. It will confirm a view that is held in some circles that our government does not respect dissent. The government will be regarded as intolerant, undemocratic and authoritarian.

There are two main reasons why many government leaders adopt such a negative attitude towards student criticism of government policies. **First**, they labour under a misconception that since a student's duty is to study, he has no right to criticise government policies. These leaders fail to realize that the process of becoming educated is also a process of developing one's critical faculties. This means that as students become more knowledgeable and more conscious, they are bound to become more critical of the existing social system. It is inhuman to punish an individual for becoming more sensitive to his environment.

**Second**, many of our leaders believe that it is the height of ingratitude for students to criticise the government since it is the government that has provided them with facilities for pursuing higher education. This is why they are particularly incensed by criticism from students who are scholarship-holders.

It is obvious that such leaders see scholarships as symbols of their benevolence. They refuse to understand that in the ultimate analysis, scholarships come from the rakyat. It is the rakyat's right to expect the government to provide for the higher education of their children. By giving scholarships, the government is merely doing its duty to the people. It is to fulfil such responsibilities to the rakyat that we have entrusted the government with power and authority. It has no right to expect unquestioning loyalty to its policies from students, whether they are on scholarships or not.

The fact that many government leaders continue to demand blind adherence to their thinking shows that they have yet to free themselves from paternalistic attitudes rooted in a feudal past.

How can we expect such leaders to help evolve a modern, progressive, democratic society?

*Chandra Muzaffar,  
President.*

6th February, 1984

one time opponent of the NEP took the view that if the policy had not succeeded in achieving its objectives then the best thing to do was to extend the deadline until success was accomplished. This is a good example of bad logic. Anwar does not seem to understand that the problem is not time but the concept embodied in the NEP itself. Even if the government extended the policy for the next 100 years, it will not be able to resolve the poverty of the masses, a majority of whom are Bumiputras or close the gap between the rich and poor or transform society in such a way that the majority benefit directly from the development process.

What this means is that the NEP is the wrong road to genuine development. Why should we persist in travelling along the wrong road? However long we may travel, we can be certain that we will not reach our destination.

## Reagan's Running Again

There is a good chance that Ronald Reagan who has just announced his intention to contest the Presidency in this year's election, may get re-elected. Apart from the advantage of incumbency, some improvement in the economy, the reduction of certain taxes, some control over inflation and increased employment opportunities could all work in his favour. Most of all, President Reagan has succeeded to whip up nationalist sentiments among a lot of Americans through the invasion of Grenada and his confrontational attitude towards the Soviet Union.

What many Americans do not realize is that his pursuit of 'American Supremacy' has resulted in the heightening of international tensions. Through his massive arms build-up he has made the world a much more dangerous place to live in. At the same time, Reagan is completely insensitive to the aspirations of the Third World. His attitude towards the Law of the Seas, Antarctica, UNESCO & UNCTAD are all proofs of this. Indeed, even many moderate Third World leaders see the Reagan administration as a major obstacle in the evolution of a more equitable international order.

It is ironical therefore, that such a leader should regard his candidacy for the presidency as something beneficial for world peace. In announcing his candidacy he stated that he has "to finish the race" he began to promote international cooperation.

One can only pray that in the course of it he does not finish off the human race.

## No Information . . . . says Minister of Information

Recently, Minister of Information, Adib Adam, made news again. He was unhappy that people continued to analyse and reflect upon the constitutional crisis even after it had been resolved. Since the whole thing had been settled, there was no need for post-mortems and the like he argued.

Now this is an amazing view coming as it does from a Minister of Information. Before the crisis became a crisis there was no information. When it became a crisis, there was one-sided information. When the crisis is over, he insists that there should be no information. Surely, the least we can expect of a Minister of Information in a democracy is a commitment to information — to the right of the people to know.

## Control news . . . . to preserve the 'truth'

Non-aligned information ministers met recently in Jakarta to express their opposition to the dominant control of western news agencies over news flow.

Aliran is also opposed to this dominance. On a number of occasions in the past we have criticised western information imperialism clearly evident in the way in which its vested interests are propagated through the media. This is what leads to distortions, exaggerations and sometimes outright lies about what is happening in our countries.

But what is the solution of these non-aligned states? They want to strengthen government-owned news agencies which present only the government side of an issue. We have seen this happening in our country where BERNAMA ignores any criticisms made of the government however just and legitimate they may be. This is happening in a number of other countries too where government control over the media is so tight that the truth is effectively suppressed. A rosy picture is painted of the government's so-called achievements while the opposition is deliberately smeared. Indeed, one sometimes feels that national news agencies in many third world countries have less respect for freedom of expression and dissent than the western news agencies.

How can a government complain of western news monopoly when it

establishes its own news monopoly within its own national boundaries? Have our third world governments forgotten that golden rule of life, "Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you?"

## Dead men tell tales

For the last few months there has been quite a lot of international reaction to the organised killing of so-called "criminals" in Indonesia. The government is clearly behind this attempt to reduce the crime rate through the easiest — and most inhuman — way: by killing off known criminals with the help of killer squads.

The government thought that once the job was done, everyone would be happy. Many people were in fact glad since robberies and murders have become quite commonplace in many Indonesian cities. But some of the more sensible Indonesians soon realized the dangerous implications of what was happening. Even a "known" criminal has the right to be protected by the law. Indeed, only the law can decide whether he is a criminal or not and how he should be punished. This is what the rule of law means. If the rule of law is undermined, then there will be nothing but anarchy.

Besides, there's always the danger of making a mistake, of killing the wrong guy. Apparently, this had happened in a couple of instances. More serious is the fact that this method of killing could be used against dissidents and critics. And why not? For it happened in Brazil where killer squads were also organised initially to reduce crime.

Even if nothing of this sort happens in Indonesia, one should ask whether killing off criminals really reduces crimes. Shouldn't we eliminate the underlying causes of crime? For unless that is done there'll always be criminals.

It is good that Indonesians and others are asking these questions. Those in power were wrong in believing that dead men tell no tales. The dead sometimes speak through the living.

## Ye educated — bring forth children!

Singapore — the little island-state known for its productivity — has begun yet another productivity drive. This time

it is sexual productivity. Its leaders want educated women to produce more children. Educated women, according to Lee Kuan Yew and Dr. Goh Keng Swee, produce better quality children who will eventually become the type of leaders that Singapore needs. And so, the educated are being given all sorts of incentives to produce more. At the same time, the less educated will be discouraged from having too many children.

Singaporeans and non-Singaporeans alike have criticised the policy for its absurdity. It is not only elitistic but also represents the worst form of social engineering. Surely, the task of a good government is to improve the educational and economic standards of the population at large. There must be a serious effort to equalise opportunities for all. It is social transformation — not social engineering — that is needed.

By embarking upon such a policy, Singapore leaders are in fact trying to ensure that the children of the elites continue to be the elites of the future. They want elites to perpetuate elites. It is like the Mandarin system of ancient China.

But the Mandarins of modern Singapore will not find it easy to carry out their social engineering. Apart from opposition from sections of their own otherwise docile population, Singapore leaders fail to realize that education and upward mobility invariably limit family sizes.

Perhaps the leaders need to educate themselves before getting the educated to procreate!

## The NEP — and Anwar's long, wrong road

When some government leaders started talking about extending the NEP (the New Economic Policy) beyond 1990, critics pointed out that the basic philosophy of the NEP, its concept of development, was wrong. For that reason, they argued, the NEP as it stands should not be extended beyond 1990. What we need is an alternative philosophy of development with alternative strategies of growth and redistribution.

In his response to these critics, Anwar Ibrahim, UMNO Youth leader and Minister of Culture, Youth & Sports and

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