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# ALIRAN

for U • N • I • T • Y MONTHLY

## HOW THE BARISAN RETAINED ITS TWO- THIRDS MAJORITY



**inside**

### THE OPPOSITION DEMOLISHED ? PHANTOM VOTERS & ELECTORAL ROLLS IRREGULARITIES

The 1990 General Elections: Some Implications and Consequences...5; State Loyalties and the Federal System...7; PBS and Mass Communal Fear...8; The Opposition Demolished?...10; The Integrity of Creation...11; Beyond the Narrow-minded Path...14; In Italy, a Case of Indifference Makes Some Stop and Think...17; Letters...18; Sustainable Development...26; Fight on While There is Breath...29; Media and Human Rights...31; Sebab Angkatan Menang Besar di Kelantan...32; Current Concerns...34; Irregularities on the Electoral Rolls...40

# How the Barisan retained its two-thirds majority

**T**here was no doubt that the Barisan Nasional (BN) would win the eighth general elections held on 20 and 21 October 1990.

However, three days after nomination day, as the campaign picked up momentum, there was a feeling, even within Barisan circles, that the ruling Coalition may lose its two-thirds majority in Parliament. Two factors were mainly responsible for this perception. There was a pro-Opposition mood in certain places in the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia – in the Federal Territory, in Penang, in parts of Perak and even in parts of Kedah, Negri Sembilan and Johore. Coupled with that, was the fear that the BN might lose a large number of seats in Kelantan and Trengganu. BN party workers were finding it difficult to penetrate Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU) strongholds especially in Kelantan.

BN leaders knew that if they lost seats in parts of the West Coast and in the two East Coast states, their two-thirds majority in the Peninsula would be in jeopardy. This is what happened in 1969. In such a situation, the BN will have to depend upon Sabah and Sarawak to give it a clear two-thirds majority.

Then suddenly on the evening of 15 October 1990, Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) decided to withdraw from the BN and throw its weight behind Semangat 46. Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the BN leadership were in a quandary. BN leaders were convinced that the two-thirds was as good as gone. For PBS was certain of winning 14

In this, and the four accompanying articles, CHANDRA MUZAFFAR examines various aspects of the recently concluded general elections.

— Editor

out of 20 parliamentary seats in Sabah. There was a good chance that it might win in two or three other constituencies where it had fielded independents against United Sabah National Organization (USNO) candidates.

It was at this point that Mahathir decided that the 'defeat' he had suffered at the hands of the PBS would be transformed into 'victory'. In order to do this, he raised the spectre of a Christian threat to Muslim political power. The Christian PBS, it was alleged, was ganging up with the Chinese DAP and using Semangat 46 and

PAS Malays, to destroy Malay supremacy (ketuanan Melayu). With the help of the mainstream media and through dirty, underhand tactics, Dr Mahathir managed to create, within a couple of days, a siege mentality amongst a substantial segment of Malay society. (This issue is discussed in greater detail in one of the subsequent articles).

It was this fear of losing their political power, of being overwhelmed by the others, which Mahathir exploited to regain lost ground among the Malay voters. It appears to have worked in those constituencies on the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia where Malays are anywhere between 20 and 60 per cent of the electorate. In some of the ethnically-mixed constituencies of the Federal Territory, for instance, there was undoubtedly a marked swing to the BN among Malay voters in the last two or three days before 21 Octo-



Polling day: Dr M's fear tactic swayed a segment of Malay voters to unite behind him.



**Lim Chong Eu defeated: The PBS defection boosted the morale of Penang's Chinese voters.**

ber. The fear of losing political power to the non-Malays and non-Muslims which had gripped the community prompted Malay middle-class and working-class voters to unite behind the Mahathir leadership. This was even more evident in various constituencies in Penang where the Malays are acutely conscious of their minority status.

But Mahathir's fear tactic had very little impact in a state like Kelantan. In Kelantan, the Malays not only constitute more than 90 per cent of the total population but also enjoy overwhelming political dominance. In nine out of 13 parliamentary constituencies, for instance, more than 95 per cent of the voters are Malays. The Malays in Kelantan feel politically and psychologically secure.

If anything, that feeling of security is enhanced by the knowledge that Malay culture and Islam have strong and sturdy roots in Kelantanese soil. Kelantanese sometimes refer to their state as 'the verandah of Mecca' (Serambi Mekkah). Besides, in the recent elections their confidence received a further boost through the tacit support given by the state bureaucracy and perhaps even the palace, to the people's goal of changing their government — a goal which they achieved through the total elimination of the BN in all state and parliamentary seats! In a society such as this, there was no way that Mahathir's communal

propaganda could make even a dent.

In Trengganu, some of the factors which reinforced the determination of the Kelantanese to achieve political change, were not present. Nonetheless, Trengganu too is a Malay majority state with six out of its eight parliamentary constituencies boasting of Malay electorates of over 95 per cent. This explains to a large extent why the mass communal fear which affected voters in some of the West Coast states had very little impact in Trengganu.

Did Mahathir's attempt to create a siege mentality among the Malays and the PBS decision to quit the BN affect the non-Malay electorate in Peninsular Malaysia? The PBS decision was a morale booster to constituencies with huge Chinese majorities in a Chinese majority state like Penang. It is quite conceivable that the decision inspired Chinese voters in these constituencies to go for a change. If the PBS could come out of the BN and become an Opposition state government, there was no reason why Penang should not also vote in an Opposition administration — so the thinking went. This is one of the reasons why a large number of Chinese-majority state constituencies on Penang island fell to the Opposition. Elsewhere in the Peninsula, especially in states where the majority of parliamentary and state constituencies have sizeable Malay electorates, the PBS move does not appear to have made any impact upon the Chinese voters.

Indeed, some Chinese voters even in those urban constituencies in the Peninsula where they enjoy a slight majority, seem to have been somewhat affected by Dr Mahathir's massive communal onslaught. This may explain why in certain ethnically-mixed constituencies in Negri Sembilan, Johore and Melaka, the Opposition did not fare as well as it did in 1986. The fear of a recurrence of 'May 13th', brought about through constant harping upon the ethnic riot of 1969, especially by Dr Mahathir Mohamad, may have also

deterred Chinese and non-Malay voters from supporting the Opposition.

It is apparent from our analysis that elite manipulation of communal fears played a crucial role in strengthening the BN's electoral position. It is perhaps the single most important factor responsible for the coalition's ability to retain its two-thirds majority in the Dewan Rakyat.

As in past general elections, the mainstream media's highly biased crusade on behalf of the BN was also an important factor. In a sense, TV3 and dailies like *Berita Harian* and *Utusan* went out of their way this time to denigrate and demean the Opposition. Blatant lies and distortions were symptomatic of their filthy campaign. (*The next issue of the Aliran Monthly will carry an article on the role of the mass-media in the general elections*).

The Barisan Nasional as usual also used all sorts of state facilities for the election campaign. There is evidence of officials of education departments and head teachers of schools using parent-teacher associations to canvass for votes. State-owned mosques and mosque officials were used to deliver sermons urging the faithful to support the BN.

At the same time, the ruling Coalition continued to make on-the-spot financial allocations to various groups with the clear aim of inducing them to vote for the BN. This is clearly an election offence but the practice has become so endemic that the general public has become inured to it.

Various electoral malpractices, like the transfer of voters' names from one constituency to another, phantom voters, two or three voters with the same identity card number and so on, appear to have benefitted the BN more than the Opposition. There have also been reports of presiding officers showing their bias towards the BN.

However, it must be acknowledged that if the ruling Coalition retained its two-thirds majority in Parliament it was also because of some of its strengths. The BN



A day out in the city: Economic growth, stability and peace won the day for BN.



Ghafar Baba at a ceramah: The BN election machinery was superior to the Opposition's.

election machinery was far superior to that of any of the Opposition parties. This is a very important factor in any parliamentary election anywhere in the world.

The BN was also helped by the creditable performance of the Malaysian economy in the last three years. Though not all segments of Malaysian society have benefitted from the impressive economic growth since 1987, there is no

denying that certain urban centres on the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia have witnessed remarkable development. This may be one of the explanations for the BN's relatively better election results in some of the big towns on the West Coast, compared to 1986.

Recent economic growth should be viewed against the backdrop of continuous economic development in the last 33 years. This is a plus point which the BN has always used to good effect. It is true that it has ensured a certain degree of development which has benefitted substantial sections of Malaysian society over the last three decades.

There has also been political stability and peace — important ingredients of living for human beings everywhere. The BN can take a bit of the credit for this. No wonder 'stability' and 'peace' figured so prominently in its election campaign!

The Opposition through its mistakes also contributed to the BN's victory. The Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (comprising Semangat, PAS, Berjasa, Hamim and Kimma) and the Gagasan Rakyat (comprising Semangat, DAP, PRM, IPF and MSP) should never have made the elimination of the present government as their primary objective. It was obvious that the citizenry, as a whole, was not ready for such a complete, even drastic, change. Among a lot of Malays,

in particular, there is a strong nexus between 'government' and 'UMNO'. They cannot conceive of a situation where UMNO — meaning by which UMNO Baru — can be replaced as the party at the helm of government. Indeed, the very thought of replacing the government frightened some of them.

Perhaps a more limited objective would have yielded better results. The combined Opposition should have confined itself to a simple electoral pact and had as its main goal, the reduction of the BN's two-thirds majority in the Dewan Rakyat. This would have appealed to a significant segment of the voting population. For many Malaysians realize that the BN government is guilty of various wrongdoings and needs to be checked. But they are not prepared — if one may reiterate an earlier point — to throw out the present government as yet.

The contradictions between various parties within the two coalitions established by the Opposition may have also strengthened the position of the BN. The wide ideological gap that separates PAS from the DAP was certainly an issue with the voters. Many voters were also not sure whether Semangat and the DAP could work together on a long-term basis or whether Semangat and PAS could cooperate with one another beyond the elections. Indeed, even the idea of two coalitions — APU and Gagasan — was somewhat confusing to a section of the voting public.

There is yet another factor that should be considered. If some of the important individuals in the opposition front were not former government leaders who might have been tainted by some of the BN scandals of the past, their credibility would have been a lot better. As it turned out, certain Semangat leaders in particular had to convince sections of the public that they would not return to their old ways once they regained power.

For these and other reasons then, the BN managed to retain its two-thirds majority. The question now is: how will it use this majority? ●

## THE 1990 GENERAL ELECTIONS

# ... Some Implications and Consequences

One of the most important implications of the Barisan Nasional's (BN) two-thirds majority in Parliament is only too obvious to most of us. The Barisan, there is no doubt, will use this majority to amend the Federal Constitution according to its whims and fancies — as it has done before. It is not inconceivable that provisions in the Constitution which serve to check the abuse of executive power will be among the Prime Minister's targets. After the trouncing he received in Kelantan will he, for instance, curb the powers of some of those institutions and offices which he believes were partly responsible for his ignominious defeat? Because of his anger with the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) and the Sabah State government will he also use his two-thirds majority to curtail certain state powers provided for in the Constitution?

Now that he has staved off a strong challenge from the opposition and retained his legislative dominance, Dr. Mahathir can also be expected to pursue his development and industrialization policies with greater gusto. He will not be persuaded to pause and reflect on some of the pitfalls in the sort of industrialization policy he has committed the nation to.

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The Barisan... will use this majority to amend the Federal Constitution according to its whims and fancies.  
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In fact, he will be more determined than ever before to remove what he perceives as some of the impediments in his drive towards industrialization. A strong labour movement which seeks to maintain its independence will not be desirable in his scheme of things. It will fight for workers' rights while Dr. Mahathir is eager to protect the position of foreign investors. One can see Dr. Mahathir providing active support to the establishment of in-house unions, as a way of weakening the labour movement.

More than that, with his substantial parliamentary majority, it will be difficult for the opposition to check effectively all those wrongdoings which have become characteristic of his leadership. Will

**Pas victory in Kelantan: It is not wise for Pas to ease out Semangat.**



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Will the combined opposition be able to mount a serious challenge if there are more UEMs and Renongs?  
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the combined opposition be able to mount a serious challenge if there are more UEMs and Renongs? Who is going to stop Mahathir from pursuing his privatization programme — a programme which has failed miserably to uphold the tenets of public accountability? What will deter the Mahathir leadership from initiating more prestige projects like the Gentings-Fraser's Hill highway?

All this does not mean that the leadership will not continue to do some of the good things it has been doing. One hopes that it will not cease to emphasise research and development (R & D) which has been receiving more attention from the government in recent years. Similarly, the government's support for Third World causes and its commitment to the South should remain at the top of its foreign policy agenda.

From the Barisan let us now turn to the opposition. What are the implications of the election results for the opposition as a whole? Will the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU) and the Gagasan Rakyat continue to operate as two inter-related, though separate, coalitions? Seen from one angle, PAS and Semangat 46 will have to maintain their close ties, if only because they are part and



**Tengku Razaleigh: The sheer force of his personality held together two ethnic coalitions in the opposition.**

parcel of the same state government in Kelantan. If APU breaks up in Kelantan, both the parties know that UMNO Baru will make a strong bid to regain power.

It has been suggested in some quarters that PAS which is the dominant partner in the Kelantan government will try to ease out Semangat 46. It will not be wise of PAS to do this. For PAS leaders are fully aware that APU's clean sweep in Kelantan had a lot to do with Tengku Razaleigh's personal popularity in the state. Besides, PAS has to take into consideration the inclinations of the palace and the state bureaucracy.

What about Gagasan Rakyat? Semangat and the DAP cooperated quite well in the general elections. At this point in time, their relationship appears to be alright.

But there is a nagging question which must trouble the opposition. Does the Semangat leadership — which was until recently part of UMNO Baru — have the patience and the perseverance to stay with the opposition on a long-term basis? Is it true that the habits and

the life-styles of some of the Semangat leaders are not really in harmony with the hardship and sacrifice that is inevitable in the opposition's struggle? Is it possible that some of them may be lured back to UMNO Baru and the government? Perhaps some of the others will just fade away and disappear from Malaysian politics. Perhaps Semangat 46 itself may become inactive and slowly die out.

If, on the other hand, Semangat remains it may still find it difficult to command the sort of political and moral authority it enjoyed among its partners when it established APU and the Gagasan. PAS, for one thing, is electorally stronger than Semangat as proven by the number of state seats it secured in the recent election. Will PAS acquiesce with the Semangat leadership especially on those issues which distinguish the former from the latter? Likewise, the DAP both at state and parliamentary levels, is much better represented than Semangat. Wouldn't it want to exercise influence which is commensurate with its strength in the

decision-making process within Gagasan?

Semangat's inability to lead the opposition, or worse, its disappearance from Malaysian politics could create a situation where the DAP and PAS will once again dominate opposition politics. The DAP, given the nature of its electoral support, will continue to be seen as a largely Chinese opposition party. PAS, whose political base continues to be the overwhelmingly Malay states of Kelantan and Trengganu, will be perceived as a Malay-Muslim party. There will be very little communication, let alone understanding, between the two parties. Once again, there will be the sort of ethnic polarization which has characterised opposition politics since the mid-seventies. That would be a real pity.

Semangat, in retrospect, whatever its weaknesses, made a bold, brave attempt to overcome ethnic polarization within the opposition. Tengku Razaleigh's outstanding contribution to Malaysian politics was the forging of two essentially ethnic coalitions held together by the sheer force of his personality.

It was an endeavour which failed. It failed because the inter-connecting link between the Malay-Muslim coalition, APU, and the largely non-Malay coalition, Gagasan Rakyat, namely, Semangat 46 itself, could not deliver the votes on 21 October 1990. Semangat failed to prove to the Malays and other Malaysians that it was a viable political force with a national presence. If it had won a significant number of parliamentary seats on the West coast of the Peninsula — say 15 to 20 seats — it would have established its credibility. As it turned out, Semangat obtained almost all its support from the two states which are part of the traditional Malay opposition and that too, through cooperation with PAS. Semangat failed to emerge as that new element in Malaysian politics capable of providing leadership to an alternative inter-ethnic coalition.

That perhaps is the saddest consequence of the 1990 general elections. We may well be back to square one! ●

# State Loyalties & the Federal System

**T**he 1990 General Elections have brought to the fore the question of state identities, state loyalties and the federal system.

Sabah and Kelantan are among the states in the Malaysian Federation which have always been very conscious of their respective identities. Sabah, with its distinct history and background, stands apart from the Peninsula. The same can be said of Sarawak. Kelantan, with its distinct *loghat* (dialect) and certain unique cultural and social characteristics, has always been different from the other states in the Peninsula.

In the last few years, there have been mounting grievances from Sabah and Kelantan. It is significant

**Sabah; Kelantan: There is a pressing need for open, sincere dialogue between federal and state authorities.**



that when the PBS pulled out of the Barisan Nasional on 15 October, it cited various reasons, all of which are linked to State-Federal ties. The PBS was unhappy that the Barisan government in Kuala Lumpur had ignored its requests for a bigger share of Sabah's oil revenue, a university in Sabah and a television station in Sabah as part of Radio and Television Malaysia.

Many Kelantanese have also been unhappy with what they perceive as deliberate neglect of the state by the Federal government especially since Tengku Razaleigh ceased to be Finance Minister in 1984. The uneven development within Kelantan itself — certain sectors and certain groups benefiting much more from development than others — has also become an issue of sorts. There are also Kelantanese who feel that individuals and groups from the state have very

little political influence in Kuala Lumpur.

In both cases, unhappiness with the Federal government and the desire of the state to assert its rights have given rise to political heroes who somehow embody the aspirations of their respective states. Joseph Pairin Kitingan in Sabah plays this role. So does Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah in Kelantan.

It is true that both in Sabah and Kelantan genuine state grievances and legitimate state aspirations can degenerate into an expression of cultural chauvinism and parochial sentiments. To avoid that, both state and federal leaders should approach problems in state-federal relations with an open mind, free of prejudices and biases. There should be sincerity on both sides and a willingness to give-and-take. Leaders should be accommodative rather than confrontational in their attitude. What is called for, in other words, is wisdom and integrity rather than craftiness and crookedness.

Malaysian leaders should realize that federations and unions in different parts of the world, from the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia to India and Pakistan, are facing severe problems. As communities in certain regions become more conscious of their rights, they find that existing arrangements in the political and economic spheres are inadequate to take care of their aspirations. Sometimes, it is the over-centralized structure of the existing federation which imposes strains upon federal-state relations. Sometimes, the underlying causes of tensions within a particular federation are connected to the economy or to culture and religion. Whatever the cause, there is a pressing need for open, sincere dialogue between state and federal authorities.

The eighth general elections have demonstrated the importance of such dialogue in our own country●



## PBS and mass communal fear

**T**he Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) withdrawal from the Barisan Nasional on 15 October 1990, five days before polling started, was certainly unethical. It should have left the BN before nomination day or after the polls. To quit the Coalition in the midst of the election campaign was most unfair to PBS's former partners.

If the PBS action was unethical, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's counter attack was worse. Within 24 hours, he turned the PBS withdrawal into a major communal issue. He succeeded in convincing a huge segment of the Malay community that the 'Christian' PBS was teaming up with the 'Chinese' DAP and other non-Malay groups to challenge the Malay political position. Semangat 46 leaders were traitors to the Malays, alleged Mahathir supporters in the Utusan Malaysia and Berita Harian. They were guilty of destroying 'ketuanan Melayu', (or Malay supremacy) since they were prepared to work with the PBS and the DAP. For a while, Dr. Mahathir and his cronies tried to separate PAS from Semangat and went all out to woo PAS in the name of defending the integrity and sovereignty of Islam and the Malays. They were hoping that if PAS could be won over, they would not only be able to break up the PAS-Semangat tie, but would also be able to enhance their own credibility as protectors of an Islam under seige. Very soon, they realized that it was a futile exercise. It is to the credit of the PAS leadership that it refused to lend any legitimacy to Mahathir's diabolical communal game. Mahathir then began to insinuate that PAS was also in league with Christians and the enemies of Islam to destroy the political power of the Muslims.

Creating a siege mentality among the Muslims and the Malays was the primary purpose of Dr. Mahathir's massive propaganda onslaught in the three or four days before Peninsular Malaysians went to the polls on 21 October. He built up a siege



mentality characterised by a pervasive concern for the security and safety of the community. This he did in two ways. **One**, he made it very plain to the Malays and Muslims, that the PBS withdrawal from the BN was a sinister plot with ulterior religious motives. He suggested in a TV interview that the PBS request for a television station in Sabah was to propagate Christianity. He went on to imply that Semangat leader, Tengku Razaleigh had given in to this and other requests which were inimical to the interests of the Muslims and Islam. An Utusan columnist opined that Razaleigh had been bought by the Christians of Sabah.

**Two**, Dr. Mahathir, through RTM, TV3, Utusan and Berita Harian gave maximum publicity to a picture of Tengku Razaleigh wearing a Kadazan headgear which allegedly had a cross on it. The picture had a tremendous impact upon the Malay mind. It was confirmation that Razaleigh had sold himself to the Christians, that he had betrayed Islam. It was proof that Muslim candidates from the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU) and Gagasan could not be



**Pairin led PBS out of BN five days before polling: Unethical; Dr M played the communal game to the hilt: Vicious counter attack.**

trusted to defend the integrity of the religion.

What made matters worse was the widespread distribution of a translation of a letter purportedly written by Pope John Paul II to the Sabah Chief Minister, Joseph Pairin Kitingan, urging him to demolish mosques and to continue Christianizing Sabah. It is significant that this letter was distributed in a number of mosques throughout the country. Another letter bearing Dr. Mahathir's signature (the Deputy Home Affairs Minister subsequently denied that Mahathir had written such a letter) was also widely circulated in Malay areas. The letter urged the Malays and Muslims to rise to the defence of Malay political supremacy and Islam which allegedly were under siege. In various mosques in different parts of the country the

Khutbah (sermon) which accompanied the Friday congregational prayer on 19 October was devoted almost entirely to the alleged threat to Islam and the Malays from Christians and other non-Muslim groups, bent on wresting power from the indigenous people of the land.

As a result of this determined, concerted attempt to raise the cry of 'danger to Islam, threat to the Malays', a substantial section of the Malay community rallied behind the Mahathir leadership and UMNO Baru. Once again, Mahathir emerged as the protector of the Malays; the saviour of the community. They turned away from Semangat and Razaleigh. They were not prepared to support Malay candidates from APU and Gagasan especially those contesting on the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia (Why East Coast Malays especially in Kelantan felt differently has been explained elsewhere in this issue). A lot of Malays were afraid, insecure. They were fearful of their future.

And yet there was no basis at all for this pervasive fear, fear of the non-Muslims and non-Malays. We shall now show how foolish was this fear by presenting the following points for consideration:

- 1) Christians comprise only six per cent, while Muslims constitute 53 per cent of the total population of 17.5 million. Islam is, besides, the official religion. Christianity has no political significance at all. Islam, on the other hand, has an important role in the nation's political and public life.
- 2) The propagation of non-Muslim religions, including Christianity, to the Muslim community is strictly prohibited in the nation's Constitution. Even on an individual basis, very, very few Muslims have become Christians or embraced other faiths. Non-Muslims, on the whole, are very cautious about touching on any subject that is even remotely connected with Islam.
- 3) The PBS is **not** a Christian party. Christianity is not its ideology. The PBS is theoretically a multi-
- ethnic, multi-religious party, though the majority of its leaders and members would be Kadazans. It can therefore be described as a Kadazan-based party. Though the majority of Kadazans are Christians, there are also a lot of Kadazans who are Muslims. The PBS itself has a large number of Muslim members. It has also a few Muslim leaders.
- 4) If the PBS was propagating Christianity, or if it was a threat to the Muslims of Malaysia, how is it that Dr. Mahathir or the UMNO Baru leadership did not complain about PBS activities before Monday 15 October? How is it that PBS' Christianity suddenly becomes a threat to Islam and the Muslims when the party leaves the Barisan coalition? Why didn't Dr. Mahathir act against the PBS for its 'anti-Islamic attitude' when the party was one of his partners in government?
- 5) In any case, how could the PBS be a threat to the Malays and the Muslims when it was leaving a Malay-Muslim led coalition to join another Malay-Muslim led coalition? In fact, the joint APU-Gagasan coalition fielded more Malay and Muslim candidates for the parliamentary election than the BN. It had 96 candidates as against 86 for the BN.
- 6) On a more specific issue, the PBS had never ever stated that the purpose of a television station for Sabah was to propagate Christianity. This is why one of the PBS leaders filed a police report against Dr Mahathir in which he alleged that the Barisan Chairman was lying when he imputed that the proposed television station would be used for propagating Christianity. None of the newspapers in the Peninsula highlighted this police report against Dr Mahathir.
- 7) The sign on the Kadazan headgear won by Razaleigh in Kota Kinabalu is **not** that of a cross.

It is a design linked to Kadazan culture and has no religious significance whatsoever. In fact, the Archbishop Emeritus of the Catholic Church issued a press statement the day after the Razaleigh picture appeared in a Malay daily pointing out that the headgear had nothing to do with Christianity. Not a single Malay or English daily carried his statement.

It is worth observing that Dr. Mahathir Mohamad himself has worn identical headgear on a number of occasions during his visits to Sabah. In fact, an old newspaper picture of Mahathir in such a headgear was circulated to the public by the Opposition, as a response to television and newspaper pictures of Razaleigh. But the Mahathir picture reached only a small cross-section of the Malay-Muslim population.

- 8) The letter allegedly written by the Pope is false and fictitious. It is such a clumsy fabrication that every part of the letter – from the address to its contents – bears the mark of fraudulence.

It is apparent from all the points that we have raised that Malay fears were deliberately whipped up through lies and distortions, manufactured by an elite, aided and abetted by certain crucial individuals in the media. The purpose of the whole exercise was only too obvious: it was to mobilise support for UMNO Baru. By creating fear, by developing a siege mentality among the Malays, the Malays could be expected to close ranks, to unite behind their national leaders. This would – and indeed, did – ensure overwhelming victory for UMNO Baru.

But UMNO Baru's victory has turned out to be a defeat for ethnic relations and national unity. Mahathir's unscrupulous manipulation of the PBS withdrawal from the BN has increased the distance between the Malays and Muslims, on the one side, and the non-Malays and non-Muslims, on the other. It has further polarized an already polarized nation. ●

## The Opposition Demolished?

**T**he sycophantic mass-media has been trying to create the impression that the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU) and the Gagasan Rakyat have been totally demolished in the recent general elections. This is not really true.

Of course, the two opposition groupings failed to achieve their primary goal — getting rid of the Barisan government, and failing that, reducing its two-thirds majority in the Dewan Rakyat. But, on the other hand, the Opposition, as a whole, is today stronger than it was on the eve of the polls.

The combined opposition has 53 seats in Parliament, compared to 47 just before Parliament was dissolved. It has 98 state seats in the Peninsula compared to 52 seats a few weeks ago. At the parliamentary level, it obtained about 46 per cent of the popular vote, compared to a little more than 42 per cent in the 1986 general elections.

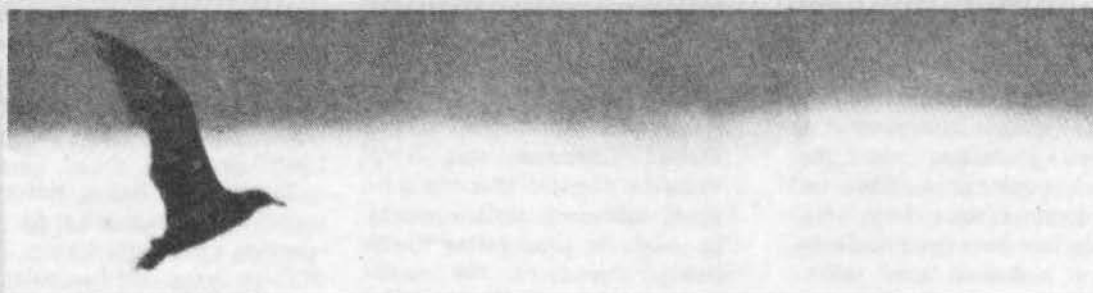
Most important of all, the Opposition today controls two state governments — one, Sabah, as a result of a political decision, and the other, Kelantan, as a result of an overwhelming electoral victory. The Opposition has increased substantially its representation in both the Penang and Trengganu state assemblies.



Something to think about: Almost half the electorate rejected the Barisan.

All in all, it is not a bad performance, considering the huge odds against the Opposition. The Barisan, on the other hand, had everything going for it — the mass media, government facilities, unlimited funds, a far superior

election machinery, etc. — and yet it obtained only 52 per cent of the popular vote at parliamentary level. In other words, almost half of those who voted on 20 and 21 October rejected the Barisan. That's something to think about! ●



If a nation values anything more than freedom, it will lose its freedom.  
And the irony of it is that if it is comfort or money it values more,  
it will lose that too.

— W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

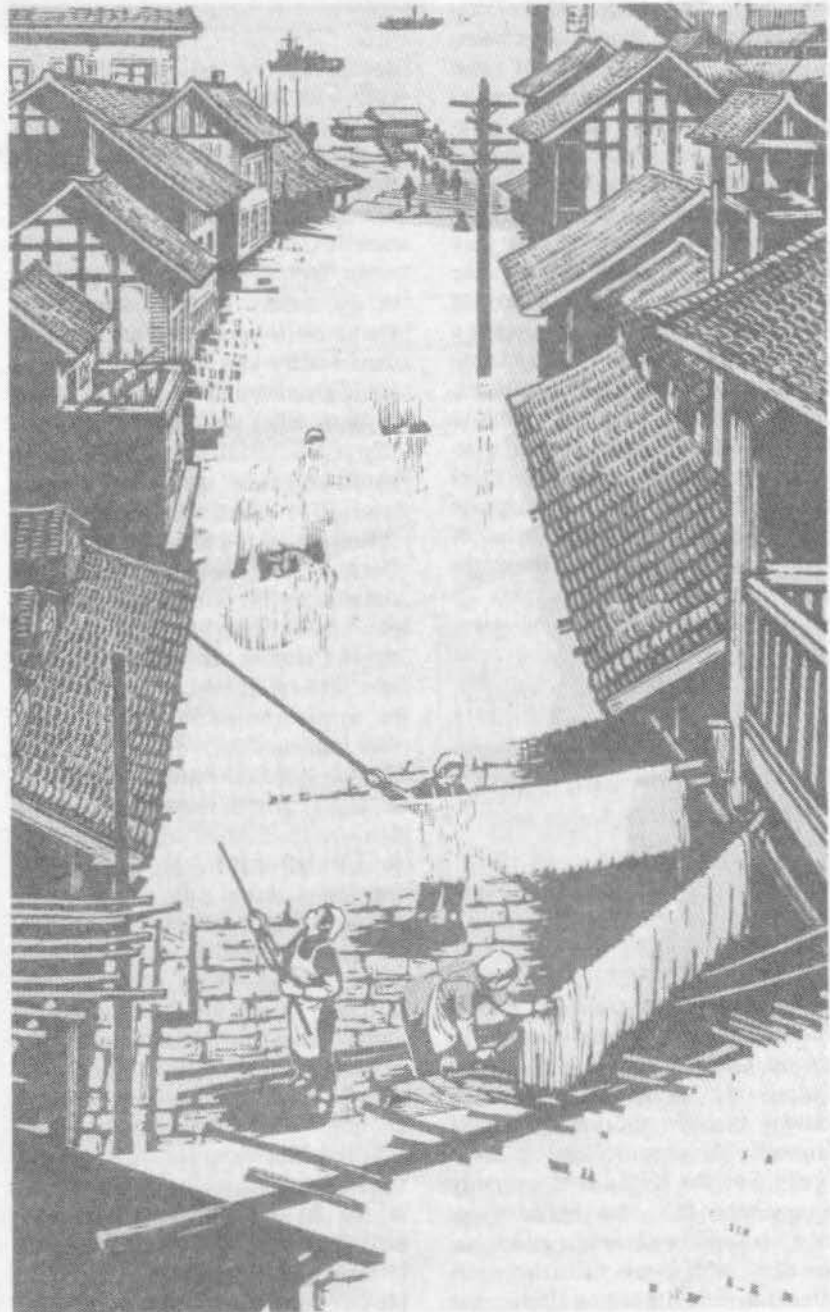
# THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

## A Hindu Viewpoint

By Anantanand Rambachan

In order to present a Hindu viewpoint on the integrity of Creation, it is necessary to begin by outlining how Hinduism understands the origin of our world and of life. The universe is described in Hinduism as the purposeful and deliberate creation of an omnipotent and omniscient being. The *Upanishads*, which are the authoritative sources of the Hindu spiritual outlook, refute the view that Creation had its origin in non-being or nothingness. "How could being be born from non-being?" asks a famous teacher in the *Chandogya Upanishad*.

The accounts of the origin of Creation have a certain uniformity in the *Upanishads*. In general, it is revealed that before the emergence or appearance of the universe, God alone existed. The unity, oneness and indivisible nature of God is emphasized. Passages in the texts then describe a desire on the part of God to create, to multiply Himself, to be born, and to grow forth. Many analogies are then provided to describe the actual emergence of Creation from God. All these suggest God to be not only the intelligent cause of all that is created, but the material basis as well. In one of the most famous analogies in the *Mundaka Upanishad*, the universe is said to emerge out of God as the spider projects and withdraws unto itself the web. Other analogies liken Creation to the sparks emerging from a single fire, or to the plants sprouting from the earth. All these images suggest that Creation has its cause in the Lord alone, who is both its origin, sustenance and end.



"The Supreme Reality creates the world of things and beings out of Itself and abides in them all."

Having brought forth everything out of Himself, God, in the *Upanishads* is then described as entering into all created things.

In Hinduism, therefore, the entire Creation could be conceived as the visible form of the Lord. Ramanuja, the distinguished Hindu philosopher, has represented Creation as the body of God. He has described God as the soul of Creation. The Supreme Reality creates the world of things and beings out of Itself and abides in them all. The *Bhagavadgita* describes the entire Creation as being threaded on God as rows of gems on a string. It rests in Him, even as the mighty wind moving everywhere rests in space. The *Bhagavadgita* identifies the Creator with the radiance in the moon and sun, the sapidity in waters, the pure fragrance in the earth and the brilliance in fire. While affirming God as the sole source of Creation and His immanence in it, Hinduism has not lost sight of His transcendent nature. In the famous *Purusha-sukta* hymn of the *Rig-Veda*, we are told that He pervades the whole world by a quarter of His being while three-fourths of Him stand over as immortal in the sky.

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...Creation has its cause in the Lord alone, who is both its origin, sustenance and end.

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In the Hindu tradition, therefore, there is a tremendous emphasis on God as present in and pervading the entire created world. Having brought everything out of Himself, He supports and indwells it all. For the Hindu who properly appreciates this, the entire Creation is endowed with a special sanctity and every form becomes precious. In Hindu tradition, the Ultimate Reality or Truth has the highest value as the goal and

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...we are united at the deepest levels of the Self in God... All beings should be treated as oneself because we do in fact share a single Self in God.

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destiny of our lives. God is identified with this ultimate Truth and Creation becomes valuable because of His presence at the heart of all things. The value of Creation is derived from it being a manifestation of God.

In fact, the spiritually ignorant in Hinduism is one who treats the universe as having an independent reality and does not see it as being grounded and rooted in God.

With what does Hinduism identify God in all of Creation? It identifies Him with the deepest level of existence in all things — the Self or *atman*. Because the Lord is one and indivisible, He constitutes the fundamental principle of unity which runs through all of Creation. He is the integrity of Creation. Hindu ethics ought to be firmly rooted in this vision of the unity of all life. If, as the Hindu tradition affirms, we are united at the deepest levels of the Self in God, this provides a profound and challenging justification for the Golden rule as a way of living. All beings should be treated as oneself because we do in fact share a single Self in God. The outcome of this should be a way of daily living in which we try to minimize the harm caused to others. This is the principle of *ahimsa*, of avoiding injury to others. But *ahimsa* can easily become a passive attitude of non-injury. In order to transform our attitudes in Hinduism to Creation, it must become an active principle of seeking to promote the well-being and happiness of all created things.

The Hindu belief in the essential unity of all that exists does not only have implications for the quality of our relationships with other human beings. Our relationships with the animal and natural world would also have to be transformed. Reckless and insensitive exploitation of these is intolerable. We are called upon to develop our sense of identity and empathy with the natural world. Our selfish abuse of Creation is partially due to our alienation from the rest of the universe. It is an alienation which has its roots in our fragmented and broken view of Creation and not in its wholeness, unity and integrity.

We need to be reconciled with Creation through a vision of the

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The interdependence of nature is a truth to which our understanding of all natural processes bear witness. In violating Creation, we unknowingly violate ourselves.

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unity of all that exists in God. It is this which gives rise to a deep sense of compassion for our fellow-beings and the subhuman world.

The Hindu affirmation of the fundamental unity of all existence has as its corollary the truth of life's interdependence. The interdependence of nature is a truth to which our understanding of all natural processes bear witness. In violating Creation, we unknowingly violate ourselves. If our vision of life's unity in God prompts a sense of compassion for all that exists, our appreciation of life's interdependence reminds us of our daily obligations to the rest of Creation. In our times, the quest for personal, communal and national rights is not complemented

by an equal emphasis on our obligations. While not consistently emphasizing the rights which ought to be intrinsic to every human being, Hinduism, in theory at least, has stressed our continuous indebtedness to Creation. It has identified the areas of our indebtedness and consequent daily obligations. For Creation and the gift of life, we ought to honour God through worship. For the recording, preservation and transmission of spiritual values and wisdom, we are indebted to our spiritual teachers. We seek to repay this through study and teaching. For all the blessings of family life, we are required to pray for the welfare of our departed ancestors and continuously serve those who are with us. For the many gifts of life in society, we ought to unselfishly promote the happiness of our fellow human beings.

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**The doctrine of Karma... includes life in its widest sense. We are under the continuous judgement of a moral law in our relationship with everything in creation.**

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Finally, the Hindu tradition reminds us of our indebtedness to non-human life forms and the inanimate world. These must also be the objects of our compassion, the recipients of our love and the beneficiaries of our service. The Hindu principle of mutual obligations undoubtedly requires a contemporary reformulation, but it is based on the conception of individual life as an integral and inter-related part of all life. We are born debtors, owing more to Creation than Creation owes to us.

There are two principles within Indian religious traditions which are relevant and resourceful in their

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**While dharma affirms our rights to decently meet legitimate wants... to satisfy one's needs in a manner which deprives another of the right to his or her right, or causes suffering, is contrary to dharma.**

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implications for our relationship to Creation. The first of these is *dharma*. *Dharma* is derived from a root meaning to support, to sustain or to hold together. At a social level, it includes all those principles which hold a human community together. While *dharma* affirms our rights to decently meet legitimate wants, it reminds us that we are truly human only in a social context. To satisfy one's needs in a manner which deprives another of the right to his or her needs, or causes suffering, is contrary to *dharma*. It is the capacity to respond to others, to enlarge our horizons to embrace the needs of others which makes us uniquely human. In a wider sense, however, *dharma* does not only refer to the holding together of human society, but to everything which is vital and necessary for the balance and harmony of the cosmos. In other words, the *dharma* principle does not only demand concern for other human beings in our actions, but concern for the harmony of Creation as a whole. If one had to put this in contemporary language, one would speak of the concern for nature as a closed system or for ecological unity.

The second principle which has implications for our relationship to Creation is the *karma* doctrine. Through this doctrine, the Hindu tradition views the entire universe as a moral stage where we are held individually and collectively responsible for all our actions. The doctrine of *karma*, however, does not limit moral responsibility to our relationship with other human beings, but

includes life in its widest sense. We are under the continuous judgement of a moral law in our relationship with everything in Creation.

Hinduism has recognized and affirmed the uniqueness and privilege of a human birth. It is unique and superior, not because it confers upon us the right to dominate and press all other life forms into our service, but because, among all other beings, we can discover and celebrate life's unity in God. We can enlarge our understanding of self to embrace all life. There is a hierarchy of life in Hinduism and the human being occupies the apex of this hierarchy because of his or her spiritual potential. Hinduism, however, has not always satisfactorily resolved and balanced its priorities in the competition for scarce resources among species. Human needs have often been overlooked. The tradition has not wrestled sufficiently with the practical implications of its vision of life's unity.

An altered attitude to Creation must have its genesis in a transformed understanding of existence. To enter into a compassionate and reverential relationship with all that exists, we must not only learn to celebrate its diversity but look beyond that diversity to the unifying Truth which runs through everything, including ourselves. It involves, in the words of the *Bhagavadgita*, "the perception of the Lord in all things and all things in the Lord." It is an outlook in which the diversified existence of everything is perceived as rooted in One. In learning to affirm an unlimited Reality which runs through everything, we discover an inner fullness in identifying that Reality in ourselves. Rejoicing in the fullness of God everywhere, we enter into a non-exploitative relationship with Creation. We learn to care for Creation, even as it bountifully cares for us. The spiritual vision includes but exceeds an ecological concern. It provides a basis for a celebrative love of Creation, a reverence for life in all its forms, and an unselfish way of sharing its many blessings. □

# BEYOND THE NARROW-MINDED PATH

## A broader approach to rights of religious minorities

**I**t is evident that more recently, many non-Muslims have become very fearful of efforts to introduce Islamic principles and values and see it as a great threat to their way of life. So great is this fear, that in their analysis of Malaysian society, some tend to focus solely on the issue of Islamization. In their analysis, they see themselves as members of religious minorities which are confronted by an aggressive Islam that encroaches on their religious rights as well as their personal rights and liberties. Consequently, they argue that what is of utmost importance today is the defense of these religious rights and liberties.

Some of this fear is most certainly warranted. The recent amendments regarding the conversion of minors, the inequitable allocation of religious places of worship, and the availability of literature and tapes which are openly hostile to certain religious minorities are all cause for concern.

At the offset, the Society for Christian Reflection (SCR) stresses that any effort to introduce Islamic values should take into account the values of other religious groups. This should be done through a process of consultation and dialogue. Because of Malaysia's multi-religious and multi-ethnic nature, it is of utmost importance that mutual respect of all religions

should be held primary when any decision to inculcate Islamic values is suggested.

Though we sympathise with all those who feel threatened, however, it is also the view of SCR that Malaysian society cannot and should not be analysed solely from the perspective of the erosion of the rights of religious minorities. This type of analysis could be accepted if it was true that only the rights of religious minorities were being threatened. An honest appraisal of Malaysian society, however, indicates otherwise.

It is evident today that a majority of Malaysians are denied

the right to political participation and the man in the street has little control over the decision-making process. A majority of Malaysians are also denied the right to freedom of information. In the case of the ISA and the ESCAR regulations, all Malaysians are denied the right to trial and can be summarily incarcerated. Workers are denied the right to a just living wage and the freedom to organise unions and carry out union activities is severely restricted. Land is denied to those who most need it — squatters, peasants, the Orang Asli and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak. Women, as a whole, have much less



No place to call home: The rights of ALL Malaysians must be protected.

legal rights than men and many are victims of indiscriminate and violence.

Thus, to talk and act as if the religious minorities group is the only group in this country whose rights are negated is to overlook the systematic gross violation of the basic human rights of a vast majority of Malaysians.

It is indeed necessary that individuals should be concerned and prepared to make a commitment to defend their rights. In this regard, SCR appreciates and commends all those individuals and groups which have sacrificed time and effort towards this end. SCR is, however, disturbed when defending minority rights becomes an obsession that fails to take into account the rights of all Malaysians.

This obsession with the defense of "our" rights probably stems from the fact that most of us are only concerned with ourselves. We express scant empathy towards our neighbour, but get very concerned when someone in our family or a close friend is exploited or victimised. Is it possible then that the obsessive defense of the religious rights of "our" community is little more than an extension of this self-centeredness: me, my family, my friends, my religious community? Recent events have demonstrated that more people are willing to stand up and defend minority rights than, for example, defend the independence of the judiciary.

### The Consequences

The obsessive defense of the rights of religious minorities leads to certain very unhealthy consequences. First, being obsessed with the defense of the rights of religious minorities automatically leads to the development of two confrontational groups; the first comprising the religious minorities and the second group, Muslims. When we choose to analyse society in this narrow way, we tend to overlook the fact that the majority of Malaysians, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, are either workers, squatters, fishermen, peasants or/and women — all groups

that are in one way or another victimised and whose best interests are not served by dichotomizing them strictly on the basis of religion. When we insist on seeing people as belonging to large uniform blocks, we become unable to take into account the actual diversity of concerns and interests that exist.

Second, when we get into such a confrontational situation, we begin to hold all Muslims responsible for the loss of "our" rights. This leads to a heightening of religious tension and stifles the process of dialogue that takes place daily at the workplace and in our neighbourhood. A workmate, neighbour or friend is seen increasingly as "one of them" rather than as that special individual with whom we have been interacting well over many years. We are unable to understand that since political power is in the hands of a few, a majority of Malaysians are being swept along in precisely the same way that "we" are.

Third, when "we" see ourselves as a block being confronted with this "external threat", "we" tend to overlook and downplay the real and very serious dichotomy that



**Friday prayers: Preoccupation with the issue of 'an aggressive Islam' conditions one to see the worst and disregard the good and noble in the community.**

may exist within our own religious communities. When we see the supposed "enemy" at the door, we make "our" unity the overriding priority. "We must not fight among ourselves", is an often used phrase when we adopt this narrow approach and it leads to the building and perpetuating of a false unity.

Fourth, this narrow approach makes us less open to self-criticism. Since we see ourselves as victims, we often tend to overlook our own worst failings and wrongdoings as a particular religious community. "They" are the ones who are the aggressors and it is on "them" that we focus our criticism. Being preoccupied with the defense of "our" rights makes us overlook our own worst shortcomings.

Fifth, this approach stresses on the worst in others and their religious traditions. When we become preoccupied with the issue of an "aggressive Islam", we are quick to notice the most repressive, reactionary and bigoted things done by Muslims rather than the great and noble things that have been done by them. Within the Muslim community, there are persons who are fair and broad-minded, just as there are those who are narrow-minded and bigoted — the same as in any religious community. Our preoccupation with the issue of an "aggressive Islam", however, makes us focus exclusively on the activities of the latter group and we allow them to condition our understanding of Islam.

### What Then?

But shouldn't we defend the rights of religious minorities? Certainly we must. SCR is not arguing that individuals and groups stand by and allow everything to go by without a protest. SCR would, however, like to suggest that the defense of these rights be seen from within the broader context of the building of a just, democratic and free society. A society which will protect the rights of religious minorities as well as the rights of all other individuals, communities and sectoral groups.

If we were to place the defence of the rights of religious minorities within the broader context of the building of a just society, then we would understand the importance of building bridges across racial and religious barriers. Bridges that cannot be built by solely championing the rights of "our" religious community. In fact, we have seen how such an obsession not only acts as an obstacle to the building of such bridges, but, moreover, demolishes the few bridges that exist.

In order to build bridges there are several things that we must do. First, we have to become sensitive to the rights of others, be they individuals, another religious community or a sectoral grouping. As we oppose the loss of "our" legitimate rights, we have to defend the rights of all other persons as well. As we speak out against the inequitable allocation of religious places of worship, for example, we also have to be prepared to take a stand against the widespread discrimination against women, the exploitation of workers or the use of the unjust ISA.

By adopting this broader approach, we will automatically be building bridges across racial and religious barriers. To take just one example, when we oppose the detention of persons under the ISA, a repressive piece of legislation which allows for indefinite detention without trial, we would be defending the rights of not just members of our own community, but the rights of those from other religious communities and groups as well. It would be an area of protest not exclusive to our own community, but an area of protest in which we would be joining hands with members of other religious communities. A bond of mutual respect and cooperation would be formed between all those who unite in the defence of this common right.

When we adopt this broader approach, it is imperative that we make great efforts to be consistent if we are to be taken seriously. We have to go beyond this bad habit of taking a stand on a common issue only when members



**Christians at prayer: The rights of every religious community are guaranteed if society is basically just, democratic and free.**

of "our" religious community are affected. For example, how seriously would we be taken if we were to oppose the ISA only when it is used against members of our own religious community. Surely if the common issue is that of being against detention without trial, a stand should be taken on each and every occasion that the ISA is used. We cannot claim to be adopting a broader approach if we were to respond to the common issues only so far as they affect us.

A broader approach also demands that in addition to speaking out on the common issues, we also have to speak out against the violation of the rights of others, even though this violation may not directly affect our well-being and security. For example, if an article was written in which Muslims and Islam were portrayed in a very negative light, shouldn't we take great offence to such an article and criticise it? Is it right that we adopt the attitude of 'it is up to them to speak out and condemn that article - it doesn't involve us?'

Second, we must strive to

counter narrow-mindedness and shallow thinking that exists within "our" own community. If we expect others to be critical of themselves and their traditions, then shouldn't we in turn do likewise? If we expect the more liberal Muslims to counter those Muslims who are bigoted and narrow-minded, then shouldn't we in turn do the same? Wouldn't it be dishonest of us to expect others to engage in self-criticism while we refuse to condemn the wrongdoings committed by members of our own community?

Our openness to criticism and self-criticism will earn us the respect of members of other communities who are also interested in engaging in a similar process within their own community. As we strive to counter bigotry and narrow mindedness in "our" own community, we will become united in a common struggle with members of different religious communities who are engaged in the same endeavour.

SCR would thus like to suggest that defending the rights of religious minorities be carried out hand in hand with the defence of the rights of all individuals, communities and sectoral groups. A broader approach which, if it is to be effective, needs to be accompanied by self-criticism and transformation of the self. It is inconceivable to envisage a society in which the religious rights of each and every religious community are protected, unless that society is basically one which is just, democratic and free.

Such a society cannot be built by concentrating solely on the defence of "our" rights. It is a common task and we have to rise to the occasion by putting the rights of all others on the agenda. The narrow defence of the rights of "our" community with scant regard for the rights for others would be a grave mistake; a great squandering of opportunities that we will have to account for to future generations. □

*Executive Committee  
Society for Christian Reflection.*

"What comes from the lips, reaches the ear. What comes from the heart, reaches the heart."

— ARAB PROVERB

## In Italy, a Case of Indifference Makes Some Stop and Think

**R**OME — Every now and then a relatively small incident causes a country to examine its soul, and the sad tale of six-year-old Vanessa Moretti has made Italy look inward this week. They do not like what they see, some Italians say.

On Saturday, Vanessa was driving to the beach with her father, Marco, when he fell dead at the wheel from a heart attack as they entered a tunnel along a stretch of highway near Florence.

Before dying, Mr. Moretti, who was 33, managed to pull the car over to the tunnel wall and, according to press accounts, told his daughter to make her way home. Out she went into speeding traffic to seek help.

Cars whizzed by so fast that the gusts of wind they created repeatedly knocked the little girl down. Scratched, bleeding and in tears, she walked out of the tunnel and along the open highway, covering at least two kilometers (1.2 miles) over the next 30 minutes.

In that period, hundreds of cars passed, but not a single one stopped until a motorist came to her aid and phoned the police. Saturday was the start of Italy's summer exodus from the big cities, and, one newspaper wrote, "along the happy road of vacation there were no scheduled stops for attending to the pain of others."

The episode startled many Italians, and it landed on newspaper front pages along with commentaries about a country that, several writers suggested, may be getting too rich for its own good.

Italy's self-image — and outside reputation, for that matter — tends to be that of a warm country

with caring people, especially where children are concerned. This was particularly true in less affluent but perhaps gentler days, some said, and so the weekend display of mass indifference left a foul taste.

Vanessa is "a symbol of an Italy that we would like to ignore — a cold Italy, at times glacial, where in the best of cases each one thinks only about himself and a few others more or less close to him," a University of Padua sociologist, Sabino Acquaviva, wrote in the newspaper *Corriere della Sera*.

"We have begun to show the cold, glacial face for which only recently we used to rebuke other countries that once were richer than ours," Mr. Acquaviva said. He referred to Italy several times as the "ex *Bel Paese*" — "the once-beautiful land."

*L'Unita*, the Communist Party daily, lamented in a front-page commentary on Tuesday that this television age had made all disasters — from war to the plight of little girls — seem abstract and distant. "A sheet of glass is interposed between us and the world that once and for all eliminates real, tangible and sensitive awareness of others," the newspaper said.

It is not the first time that Italians have asked themselves whether their prosperity has come at the expense of traditional values.

In conversations, some here worry about the enormous sums that are spent on everything from stylish clothes to children's birthday parties, all in the name of *bella figura*, or creating a good impression. In Rome, it is common to hear people bewail that even basic courtesy has become a thing



**Affluent Italy: A warm, caring land turns glacial.**

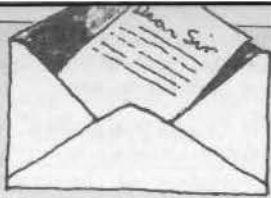
of the past.

These complaints are not unique to Italy, of course, but that is small comfort to many Italians who fear that they are losing their essence bit by bit. And to have a six-year-old girl walk the highway in tears while vacationers zipped past her was more than some people could bear.

"Once there were no highways, and in some places not even roads," Mr. Acquaviva wrote. "There was child labor and the exploitation of children. But it was more unlikely that, out of simple indifference, help would have been denied to a child in trouble." □

By Clyde Haberman

Source: *International Herald Tribune*, 20-7-1990 — Friday



## LETTERS

We welcome letters from readers. Letters can be either in English or Bahasa Malaysia. These letters may be edited for purposes of space and clarity. The views may not be those of the Aliran Monthly. Pseudonyms are accepted but all letters should include the writer's name and address. Letters should preferably be typewritten with double-spacing; if hand-written they should be legible.

Letters should be addressed to the Editor, Aliran Monthly, P.O. Box 1049, 10830 Penang, Malaysia.

### POLITICIANS TO BLAME FOR ETHNIC POLARIZATION

In the STAR of 18 August 1990, it was reported that the Prime Minister had described the statement made by the Semangat 46 leader on the appointment of a Chinese Malaysian as deputy Prime Minister as "stirring up racial sentiments" to gain the people's support.

If every issue is construed to be "racial", little wonder then that after over thirty years of independence, there is no sign of a truly united Malaysian nation. So long as politicians continue to thrive on simple-minded, innocent human beings in order to gain communal support to stay in power, there will be no real peace in this nation for another thirty years.

In any democratic form of government, the party that commands the majority in the Legislature is called upon by the King to form the Government. From amongst its elected representatives, a Prime Minister is chosen who in turn appoints his deputy. Since in Malaysia only citizens are permitted to be candidates and thus elected, where in our Constitution it is stipulated that the Prime Minister or his deputy must be from a particular community?

Let me recall an observation made in the mid-fifties by the founder of UMNO, the late Dato Onn bin Ja'afar. Then addressing a public rally at the Esplanade in Penang on the night of 9 December 1956 he said "I am not anti-Chinese" but "I will never be a party to making the Malays a backnumber, politically, economically or socially". He then recalled that in 1951 when he was President of UMNO, he had said there were non-Malays in this country who had better claims than some Malays to be accepted as nationals. "I am referring to the straits-born Chinese, the Eurasians and others who had made this country their permanent home and the object of their loyalty. I will stand by that statement today". Commenting then on the defeat of the Alliance in the Penang

Municipal Council elections, he stressed "it denotes an awakening amongst a large section of the electorate of Georgetown to the dangers inherent in the affairs of this town being in the hands of one party without an effective opposition".

Thirty-four years later at the Semangat 46 and DAP ceramah at Dewan Sri Pinang, Marina Yusof said "the colours of our skin or our origin should no longer be the prime concern or be turned into issues to divide the races".

Now that we are in the computer age, our outlook in life should be more broadminded yet there are still politicians who are communalising various issues. Politicians are the ones to blame for ethnic polarization in Malaysia - one of them is none other than Dr. Mahathir.

K.T. ONG  
Penang

### DAMN IT! DOES ANYBODY CARE?

The controversial Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River in China, the world's biggest hydroelectric power project, which seemed to have been put aside for some time to the relief of environmentalists, is back on the track for a decision soon.

Recently, it was reported that the pro-dam lobby headed by PM Li Peng now has a good chance of getting the project off the ground.

The 185-metre high dam with its 600 Km long reservoir is expected to provide industries with up to 17,000 megawatts of electricity, stop catastrophic flooding in the Yangtze valley and improve river navigation.

However, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee, a group of some 2,000 scientists, academics and government officials published a highly critical report which concluded that the dam would be ineffective at flood

control.

Moreover, its reservoir would soon be filled with silt which would reduce storage capacity. The Yangtze is the third most silt-laden river in the world and 70% of all its silt would end up trapped in the reservoir bringing many of its 26 turbines to a grinding halt for months at a time.

The Ministry of Communications, the agency responsible for navigation, fears that the river's shipping traffic would be severely disrupted during the 20-year construction period. After the project's completion, sedimentation in the upper reservoir near Chongqing could choke the city's vital harbour.

Flooding the Three Gorges would uproot more than one million people and resettlement could add an additional US\$4.8 billion. It is said that the official cost is US\$10 billion but this excluded debt repayments and inflation. The true cost over the 20-year construction period would be US\$50 billion with 6% inflation and 9% interest on the loan. With greater inflation, the cost could leap to US\$135 billion.

The huge reservoir would cover dozens of historical and archaeological sites. Parts of 10 cities would be inundated; more than 800 villages and up to 44,000 hectares of precious farmland would be destroyed. An estimated 80 species of fish would be wiped out along with the habitat of the Yangtze sturgeon and alligator and numerous endangered species including the Asian Waterfowl and Siberian crane.

Located on a major geological fault, the reservoir will impound such a huge quantity of water that it could trigger an earthquake that would wreak havoc to nearby populations and even damage the dam itself.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) funded a US\$14 million feasibility study on the project. While claiming that it found the proposed construction "technically, financially and economically achievable", the CIDA refused to release the study report because it says the Chinese government requested confidentiality.

Canada's auditor-general, Kenneth Dye, had announced that the CIDA contract failed to address adequately the issue of technology transfer and had not provided the Chinese with the information they required on hydrology, the environmental impact, costs and benefits. That led to a Canadian newspaper concluding that the auditor-general's findings, "will add credence to the criticism that Canada is pushing firms the Three Gorges project for the sake of lucrative contracts for Canadian firms without regard for the environment." Should the project go through, Canadian engineering firms stand to get huge contracts to the tune of US\$2-3 billion.

The World Bank Committee that reviewed the feasibility study stated that the sections on the environment and resettlement were inadequate and recom-

mended substantial revision which should be completed within two years.

What you can do:  
Please write letters to the persons below urging them to stop supporting the Three Gorges project.

Premier Li Peng  
c/o State Council of the People's  
Republic of China,  
Beijing, China.

Margaret Catley-Carlson  
President CIDA  
200 Promenade du Portage  
Quebec K1A 0G4, Canada

Barber Conable  
President, The World Bank  
1818 H Street NW  
Washington DC 20433  
USA

Please send copies of your letters to us in  
the APPEN Secretariat,  
c/o Sahabat Alam Malaysia,  
43 Salween Road,  
10050 Penang

S.M. MOHD. IDRIS  
Coordinator  
Asian Pacific People's Environment  
Network  
Penang

## WHAT ABOUT THE LOCAL FEUDALISTS?

**P**lease allow me to comment on the article 'Don't blame Saddam alone for Gulf Crisis' by Kassim Ahmad of Penang which appeared in the NST's (18 August) Saturday Forum. Said Kassim amongst other things, "Feudalism belongs to the museum of history..." What about our feudalists? We have thousands of them. And since Merdeka, oh, how they've squandered! Add that to the squandering done by our ministers and wakil rakyat and it's no wonder we're living in poverty in a rich country.

ARIF  
Bukit Pinang, Kedah.

## FEDERAL TERRITORY OF JOHOR BAHRU?

**I** refer to the report in the STAR (21 July) entitled "Labuan issue a Parliament matter - Ghaffar". An interesting constitutional question arises. Does the federal government have the

authority to take territory from a state and declare it "federal territory" without the state's approval?

If so, could Johor Bahru, if it flourishes and booms under the "growth triangle" concept, be declared "federal territory" without the state government's approval?

Could an expert on the federal constitution comment?

J. FERNANDEZ  
Johor Bahru

## NO EVIDENCE? NO PROBLEM, USE THE ISA!

**W**e have recently been made aware of the detention in the last two years of six government officials under the ISA. These men, who worked in the Registration and Immigration departments, are said to have been part of a syndicate that forged passports and identity cards. However, there is insufficient evidence pointing toward their guilt. Thus they were picked up under the ISA rather than charged in the courts for the relevant criminal offences.

The lack of evidence has been admitted by none less than the Deputy Home Minister, Datuk Megat Junid. When asked why the officials were not charged in court, he said (The Star, 21 August): "We have no evidence...they were not caught red-handed. The ISA is, after all, for preventive purposes."

His statement has two implications; one, persons who have not been convicted in a court can nevertheless be detained under the ISA and, two, such detentions can be justified under the guise of prevention of crime.

These implications are unacceptable violations of basic human rights. Until a person has had a fair trial and is convicted in court, he can only be said to be a suspect. And if he is only a suspect, we cannot know that he has committed a crime. And if we do not know that someone has committed a crime, how can we punish him? We must be sure that the person we punish is truly guilty. To avoid the unjust imprisonment of the innocent, a person is regarded as innocent until proven guilty. It follows that until the person is proven guilty (in court), detention imposed on him cannot be justified at all, but is, instead a gross infringement of his civil liberties.

In the present case, it is felt by the relevant authorities that the six government officers being held are guilty of fraud and corruption. No matter how strong this feeling is, it does not amount to proof or evidence. We should not allow individuals to be detained when

the authorities have only suspicion, but no evidence, against them. To allow such suspects to be detained is to give in to the authorities' whims and fancies as to who should be allowed to remain free and who should be locked indefinitely behind bars.

Just as it is wrong to 'punish' parties whose guilt has not yet been established, it is also wrong to justify such actions as preventive measures. Preventive detention under the ISA allows the authorities to deprive individuals of their freedom even though the evidence does not establish that they are guilty of any wrongdoing. We should not allow any type of detention without there being a system of checks to ensure that the authorities do not arbitrarily exercise their powers. The police, being human, can make mistakes. Hence it is necessary for an independent body to be established to check law enforcers when they are over-zealous in their duties and incarcerate individuals without sufficient evidence. Systems of checks and balances are essential to avoid unjust detentions and curb authoritarian rule. This is why an independent judicial system is a central feature in a democratic system of government.

Suspects detained under the ISA are held for as long as the authorities wish. This adds to the injustice the individuals concerned are forced to bear. We do not know how long the detainees suspected of fraud have already been incarcerated; the Deputy Home Minister said only that they were detained some time in the last two years. It should shock the sensibilities of any fair-minded person that these detainees have already spent anywhere up to two years locked up despite the absence of evidence to show they are guilty of anything. It is even more disturbing that they could be kept in detention for an indefinite period. Imagine the plight of a person sitting in a cell without having any idea when he might be released. Imagine the distress of his loved ones.

It is terribly disturbing that the authorities are using the ISA against people they suspect of crime but cannot establish in courts as criminals. Can any of us feel truly safe from having the ISA used similarly against us? The use of the ISA to detain indefinitely individuals who cannot be shown to be guilty, and may well be innocent, is a gross violation of human rights. These suspects are not even given a chance to defend themselves of the charges levelled against them in front of independent judges. Putting away persons whose only proven crime is that they are not in the good books of the authorities is as deplorable an abuse of power as the use of government office for fraud. That the ISA can be used in such a manner shows that this piece of legislation should be amended, if not abolished totally.

AMAR GILL  
Kuala Lumpur

## MORE ARTICLES ON ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION, PLEASE

I've been reading Aliran Monthly for three years. But I find that your magazine does not highlight adequately the problem of ethnic discrimination. Please publish articles on this subject showing how extensive this problem is in Malaysia. Show us which community practises discrimination, and how the Government also practises such discrimination. Explain how a particular ethnic group treats the other communities as step-children.

Perhaps Aliran could also set up an ethnic discrimination bureau to receive complaints from the public about ethnic discrimination. In this way, we can try to wipe out this social evil.

I feel that I am a victim of ethnic discrimination. The feeling is suffocating.

DI-ANAK TIRIKAN  
Sungai Petani

## IS IT A FAIR ASSESSMENT?

For several years now, I have been an interested reader of ALIRAN MONTHLY, for what seems to be the balanced perspectives on the current situation in Malaysia. Keep up your good work!

I wonder whether you could comment on a matter which I find vexing at the moment: It is this:

I recently read the book *May Day for Justice* - and was incredulous at its contents...I have been in and out of Malaysia for several years now, and so had been aware of some of the issues raised, but certainly not in that sort of detail.

I was later advised to read *Judicial Misconduct* - supposedly an objective look at some of the issues surrounding the dismissal of the former Lord President. I had high hopes that some of my questions that arose from *May Day for Justice* would be answered - especially as *Judicial Misconduct* was written by a fellow - New Zealander of some judicial standing.

However, for some reason I found that *Judicial Misconduct* seemed to be presenting hardly an objective perspective at all, but rather an apologetic for the Government stance at the time. Perhaps Peter Williams also was telling 'the truth and nothing but the truth' - but certainly not the whole truth!

What I would be interested to know is whether my assessment of *Judicial Misconduct* is a fair one - or whether

my reading of it was influenced in quite a negative way by my earlier reading of *May Day for Justice*.

Would you be able to comment on how you see both books, from your perspective, in terms of the case they present and their objectivity? Perhaps you have already made comment in an edition of Aliran Monthly which I have missed, in which case I would be interested to know the particular edition.

Thank you for any light you can shed for a non-Malaysian who thoroughly enjoys Malaysia and its people, and who tries to keep abreast of political developments in the country.

H.G. ALLAN  
Singapore

Editor's note: For various independent comments on the two books, please refer to Aliran Monthly Vol. 9 No. 11 and Vol. 10 Nos. 4, 5 and 6.

## JUDICIAL CIRCUS

They planned and schemed to bring him down

But tripped over their own lies,  
those foolish clowns

They brought some circus boys from out of town

Those who would leap at the master's sound.

When they had finished their merry-go-round

A Queen Counsel had to be fixed and found.

They dressed him in their very own gown

The newspapers reported as duty-bound.

He claimed to be balanced and renowned  
But dared venture only on his master's ground.

He spoke to those who could twist the facts around

In the mire of lies he sank and drowned.

Tis sad that a man would sell himself for a pound

To be manipulated like a toy that is constantly wound.

To exchange self-respect for the tail and tongue of a preying hound

Tis the sad story of a self-proclaimed Queen Counsel who would one day degenerate into a past noun.

M.J.  
Penang

## THE ART OF WHIPPING UP HYSTERIA

If not for the fact that they are leaders of government holding the destiny of some 17 million people in their hands, one would have been immensely amused by the recent scurry and flurry of Dr Mahathir, Ghafar Baba, Najib and Dr Ling among others.

### ELECTION WATCH

First, they reacted very strongly against the formation of Election Watch comprising some well-known Malaysians. The fact that these persons are not members of any political party does not matter to our government leaders. The main obsession is that they have been critical of the government; criticism is still being equated with disloyalty or even criminal inclinations. To an intolerant government, criticism, however legitimate and well-meaning, is always unforgivable, especially when that government is jittery about its future.

The fact that some of the individuals in Election Watch have also been critical of opposition parties on specific issues, is irrelevant, because to admit relevance would be to dilute the case. Similarly, the fact that some of these persons have occasionally commended the government on certain sound policies or actions, is also conveniently regarded as irrelevant.

Why have government leaders behaved as they have done if they have nothing to hide? After all, the idea of an election watch is not new. There was one in the Philippines in 1986, while more recently, in Panama and Nicaragua there were not only citizens' election watch groups but also international observer teams. Even former U.S. President, Jimmy Carter, was involved in the latter.

The simple purpose of an election watch is to see whether an election is being conducted fairly. It is not to suggest that the coming general elections will not be conducted fairly; even less is it to suggest that past elections were conducted unfairly. However, in the light of the recent massive duplication of voters names or IC numbers, deletion of registered voters and transfer of voters without their consent or knowledge from one area to another, there is some justification for concern.

Although the Election Commission has been doing a reasonably good job since 1955 it does not mean that its competence and independence can be taken absolutely for granted. There must be eternal vigilance, especially since the Commission has not been able to explain satisfactorily to this day the phenomena listed above.

And, was the Commission's Secretary, inadvertently betraying the Commission's lack of independence when

he accused the members of Election Watch being "anti-government"? As Secretary of the Election Commission, he has no right or business to defend the government from its critics, although he has every right to counter those who criticize the work of the Commission itself. The Secretary has made a political statement, surely something beyond the terms of reference of his position. Perhaps, after his political statement, there is good reason for the existence of Election Watch, after all.

Whatever it is, the Election Commission, like the government of the day, is not sacrosanct and above criticism.

#### PRIMITIVE POLITICS

UMNO leaders have also pounced on Tun Suffian following the latter's statement in the *Singapore Law Review* that some politicians in Malaysia were "primitive". After reading that article, I find nothing offensive in his statement. He was not referring to any particular politician or party. However, if the cap fits, those who are indeed "primitive" in their political attitudes and postures should wear it.

Tun Suffian made a lot of other statements in his interview, some of which are in fact complimentary to the government. Some - like the one on the ISA - should actually warm the hearts of government leaders to the very chagrin of those in the Opposition. But of course, he was never quoted, let alone complimented, on those.

Certain UMNO leaders even went to the extent of chiding Tun Suffian for being ungrateful to the government for his appointment as Lord President. Why should Tun Suffian feel grateful for being made head of the Judiciary? Surely his appointment was based on merit and not on favouritism or nepotism? Are government appointments based on future and everlasting gratitude? If they are, that is indeed primitive.

#### FOREIGN FUNDS AND THE VIJANDRAN SAGA

And then, one fine morning, Najib



Zainal Rampak: Branded 'irresponsible' for joining Semangat 46.

announces his dubious archaeological find that Opposition parties have been receiving tons of money from foreign and questionable sources. And, not to disappoint us, Dr Mahathir with his habit of putting his foot into his mouth, came out with a threatening statement that these parties should be investigated. However, when challenged by Opposition leaders to prove his allegations as well as to open the investigation to cover all parties, including the Barisan Nasional, Dr. Mahathir shut his gap.

How many times must the PM score his own goals? Isn't his disgraceful parliamentary performance over the Vijandran videotapes comical enough?

#### ZAINAL RAMPAK AND SEMANGAT 46

Recently, Zainal Rampak, the President of MTUC announced his membership in the Parti Semangat 46, exercising his constitutional right as a citizen. Like a pack of hyenas thinking that they had smelled blood, BN leaders pontificated noisily about how irresponsible and tragic Zainal Rampak's decision was. Oh, the workers and their interests would be neglected! Oh, the trade union movement would be politicized and betrayed! Oh, what a sell-out! Blah..... Blah..... Blah! Even Lim Chong Eu, that strutting bundle of political contradictions, rose to the occasion by deploring Zainal Rampak's terrible and unforgivable decision.

But, were all these BN leaders really concerned about the interests of the workers, and the trade unions being politicized? What, if Zainal Rampak had decided to join UMNO Baru instead of Semangat 46? Wouldn't we have heard a song with different lyrics? Wouldn't the sycophantic editors and crawling commentators of our national dailies be humming a different tune?

More to the point, aren't there many trade union leaders who are members or leaders in UMNO and other BN component parties? Has Lim Chong Eu conveniently forgotten that, in the 1969 general election which brought him and the Gerakan to power in Penang, his party fielded the then MTUC President, Yeoh Teik Chye, and another leading trade unionist, V. David, as candidates? Weren't both of them elected as MPs? Did Dr. Lim then lament over top trade unionists involving themselves in politics? Or, has he, 21 years later, developed a helpful sense of selective memory?

#### THE GSP ISSUE

As regards the latest chest-beating exercise over the GSP, why are trade union leaders who do not speak out against the petitions for its withdrawal condemned as traitors? Nelson Mandela goes all over the world to call for the continuation of economic sanctions against South Africa. Is Mandela a traitor to South Africa and her workers?

Why is Mandela doing what he is doing? Of course, sanctions hurt the workers and the country, just as the GSP withdrawal will hurt some Malaysian workers. But, apartheid hurts South Africa more, just as a repressive labour system in Malaysia hurts the workers more in the long run - a system which denies more than 100,000 Malaysian workers the fundamental human right to form their own trade union in the electronics industry.

FAN YEW TENG  
Kuala Lumpur

#### THE PLIGHT OF THE BELAGA COMMUNITIES

This is a brief article to appeal for support from friends in solidarity with the peoples' struggle in defending their life and land. On 11 June 1990 about 15 long-house communities in the Belaga district (of Sarawak) mobilized their communities to stop the indiscriminate logging in their lands. The logging activities have already destroyed their source of food. Their right to life is inalienable right and requires support from people throughout the world.

Belaga district is situated at the uppermost part of the Rejang river. It is the largest of three districts in the Kapit Division. The district covers an area of 19, 403 sq. km which consists mostly of rugged mountain ranges and thick rain forest.

The population of the district is about 13,000 comprising the following ethnic groups; Kenyah, Kayan, Chinese, Malay, Iban, Seping, Sihan, Ukit, Penan and the Kajang group (Punan, Sekapan, Kejaman, Lahanan and Tanjong). The Kayans and Kenyahs form the majority of the district's population. The people depend mainly on farming for their livelihood.

It is difficult to travel in the area. The main mode of transportation is by river. This is very expensive because of the high price of petrol. The river is unreliable and risky as several turbulent rapids make it unnavigable for express launches and other vessels. Apart from riverine transportation, the Malaysia Airlines (MAS) twin otter planes serve Belaga twice a week, but this service is very unpredictable especially during the rainy season.

Although timber is a major revenue earner for Sarawak (after liquefied natural gas and petroleum), the benefits to local minority groups in Belaga district is outweighed by the problems created by the industry. A heavy price is paid in timber extraction as hundreds of timber workers fall together with

the great trees they fell - killed or injured. Last year alone, a record 94 people were killed in logging accidents in Sarawak against 19 in 1973. And during the first two months of this year, 13 deaths were reported i.e. an increase of one compared with the same period last year.

The intrusion of timber companies into the area destroys the tribal communities as well as the physical landscape. The rivers, which the communities depend on for protein-rich fish, are being polluted. Forest destruction results in less wild boar, which is another important source of protein for the communities. Due to the erosion of the top soil (as a result of severe deforestation) the yield of rice is reduced. Since the intrusion of the timber companies, little or no compensation has been paid to the affected long-house communities in the area.

The other severe problem in the near future is the possible forced eviction of the communities, when a series of hydro-electric dams is built along the Rejang river, for the purpose of generating electricity.

The series of smaller dams is a replacement for the earlier huge Bakun project which had aroused strong opposition from the affected rural communities in the Belaga district as well as from local and foreign environmentalists. Since the announcement of the revival of the Bakun Dam with its new name i.e. the Rejang River Electricity Generation Corporation (RREGC), local environmental organizations and concerned public interest groups have raised numerous questions as to the feasibility, the cost and the socio-economic impact on the rural communities, besides the glaring lack of public accountability on the part of the federal government of Malaysia in initiating the project.

The RREGC may draw international attention as the Norwegian and Swedish firms are keen in implementing the project. Probably, the new dam structure will be constructed based on the Austrian model (Danube).

The people want the logging companies to stop encroaching into their native, customary lands. Your support for them can be expressed by sending your letter of concern to the:

●  
Minister of Resource Planning  
Petra Jaya  
Kuching  
Sarawak

Or through financial support. Donations may be sent to:

●  
Institute for Community Education  
P.O. Box 8  
96007 Sibul  
Sarawak

## PROPOSED PENANG HILL PROJECT

**I** am a Penangite and am against the Proposed Penang Hill Project. Our Chief Minister might have been carried away by yet another pride and fancy of wanting to make Penang an exemplary State in terms of development and what not. But the proposed Penang Hill project which can bring serious environmental consequences is a bad example for other States to emulate. If the C.M. has not taken into serious consideration the adverse environmental consequences connected with the Hill project, he should re-read and spend some time to meditate the Hippocratic oath. 'Purity of living' an emphasis of the Oath places health and well-being of mankind above material gains and prestige.

MR. S.K. ONG  
Johor Bahru

## MOVING BEYOND THE UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES ACT

**S**ince the Education Act is being drastically revised, it is appropriate to review the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 (UUCA) and its Amendment Act 1975 (75 Amend). The Selangor Graduates Society (SGS) has long been concerned especially with the adverse impacts of the 75 Amend. It already deplored the diminution of academic freedom, and student and graduate rights that had been enjoyed by the University of Malaya (prior to the enactment of the UUCA) by the 1971 Act but the 1975 amendments drove the final nail into the coffin.

Academics were virtually made civil servants by the implementation of the University Disciplinary Rules in 1978. These were dramatically implemented by USM when it acted against the President and Vice-President of its Academic and Administrative Staff Association in 1986.

Despite Government promises to review the UUCA as far back as 1981, no Bill has to date been tabled in Parliament.

### SGA POSITIONS IN THE PAST:

\* In April 1975 we sent a telegram to the PM deploring the 75 Amend.

\* In June 1977, we called for amendments to the UUCA to allow "the free functioning of Student Unions and other student bodies so that students have experience in running their own

organizations democratically and responsibly before they graduate."

\* In December 1977, we criticized the proposed University Disciplinary Rules since they would "effectively finish off about the one significant sector of the Malaysian community which has been able to advocate fairly independent views on national issues ranging from politics to economics."

We also felt that the Rules would "breed an atmosphere of conformity and mediocrity, where staff will avoid the most mildly controversial subjects"

\* In November 1981, we urged five major changes:

1. Restoration of direct elections of graduate representatives to the University Council.

2. Self-government, including the collection of all subscriptions by all student bodies and the repeal of sections 15 and 16 of the Act.

3. Restoration of the election of deans by faculty staff.

4. Restoration of the rights of academic staff and students to participate fully in the outside community, including joining voluntary organizations and articulating their views, without prior clearance with the Vice-Chancellors (VCs).

5. Reduction in the excessive red-tape and powers vested in the VCs.

\* A 1981 Bulletin Sizwazah editorial, in reviewing 10 years of the UUCA, asserted that "Those who should have been the brains of society have been reduced to mere overaged high school kids." It stated the effects of the UUCA went beyond the students' immediate environment. "...the fettering effects of this Act on the development of the leadership, maturity and intellect of the students would hardly encourage any feedback, even from the top echelons of society..."

\* In April 1983, while urging for the implementation of a proposed Universities Co-ordinating Council, our statement reiterated "its conviction that Malaysian universities should not be run as government departments. We believe that academic freedom and the students' right to organize and articulate are essential for meaningful university life. We are convinced that this can only be done by liberalizing the UUCA..."

\* In September 1985, we attributed the dispute between the USM VC and the Academic Staff Association to the malaise that had its origins in the UUCA. We urged "that an independent panel be established to examine our Malaysian education system, including the status of our universities..."

\* Finally, in February 1986, in criticizing the USM Disciplinary Board's action against the leaders of the Staff Association, our statement maintained

"that university autonomy was effectively killed by the 75 Amend and academic freedom has been seriously declining ever since. This decision of the USM Board tragically proves our point." We urged "the entire academic community in Malaysia to shake off its apathy and take a stand on academic freedom and the freedom of expression NOW..."

#### GOING BEYOND THE UUCA

SGS believes that the progress of university education in Malaysia can only become significant if university autonomy, academic freedom and student self-government are restored. For these to be meaningful, all Malaysian citizens must be assured the full rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Malaysian Government should immediately become a signatory to the Declaration as well as the subsequent Conventions.

In addition, the 1975 Amend must be completely repealed and the following amendments be made to the UUCA itself:

1. Section 6(1) and 20 should be amended by deleting the phrase "that it is expedient in the national interest" since it is to be assumed that the YDPA will always act in the national interest. The political circumstances that gave rise to the original phrasing no longer exist.

2. A new subsection (5) should be added to Section 11 to read:

"A Universities Coordinating Council shall be established comprising the VCs and Council Chairmen of all existing institutions operating under this Act to coordinate the development and expansion of all tertiary education institutions. They will also coordinate the disbursement of research funds provided by the Government as well as through public donations."

3. Sections 15 and 16 should be repealed as they are inconsistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. References to them anywhere elsewhere in the Act should also be deleted.

#### IN THE SCHEDULE:

1. Subsection 4(2) should be deleted if university autonomy is to be made meaningful.

2. The quantum of the fine in subsection 9(6)(c) should be raised to \$75 to match inflation since 1971.

3. All references in the Schedule to Students Representative Council shall be changed to Students Union.

4. Section 22 dealing with the Guild of Graduates should be amended by replacing subsections (1) and (2) by the following:

"All graduates of the University are automatic members of the Guild of Graduates. The Registrar shall be responsible for convening annual meetings

of the Guild and posting ballot papers for all elections of representatives to Council and Court. Each annual meeting will adopt its own rules and decide on office-bearers and activities till the next annual meeting."

Existing subsection (3) can be retained as a qualifier.

5. Sections 48 to 51 should be deleted and replaced by the following:

"48. All matriculated students of the University who have not been conferred a degree shall be automatically members of the Students Union which will be self-governing and recognized by the Council. Union dues will be collected by the Bursar as part of the University fees and be transmitted to the Union within 30 days. The Union will establish procedures for the establishment of other student bodies, which will be free to collect their own supplementary fees. But such bodies will have the right to seek annual grants from the Union for their administration and projects. Annual reports and accounts of the Union will be submitted to the Council while all other student bodies shall submit these documents to the Union. Such public accountability shall be done within 30 days of the respective Annual General Meetings. There shall be no restrictions on fund raising, as long as it does not violate any relevant Malaysian laws."

6. Section 53 should be amended by adding the following proviso at its end: "provided the Senate agrees by the same majority."

In order to further ensure academic freedom (consistent with the Lima Declaration on Academic Freedom and Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education, 1988), the existing Disciplinary Rules must be replaced by fresh ones agreed to jointly by the proposed Universities Coordinating Council and the various Academic Associations.

The Student Unions must be allowed to form a National Union as a successor to the National Union of Malaysian Students (PKPM), which became defunct as a consequence of the dissolution of its member Unions by the UUCA.

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
Selangor Graduates Society,  
Petaling Jaya.

### MONO-ETHNIC GROUPS ARE UNHEALTHY

Whenever I see a group comprising people of various ethnic origins, I feel "safe" in approaching it. Such a group is

healthy and does not pose a threat to any particular ethnic group.

But when I come across a mono-ethnic group, I feel insecure and will not even walk near it. I feel that such a group is "unhealthy" and potentially explosive.

I am sure that your readers share the same feeling, security and peace of mind whenever they are in multi-ethnic situations, e.g. at the supermarket, at Kentucky Fried Chicken and Grandy's outlets and at the Komtar lobby.

"Unhealthy" situations exist in situations where more than 80% of the people are from a particular ethnic group, e.g. certain companies and government officers and the army.

Let us try to promote healthy situations with a well-balanced ethnic mix i.e. 55% Malays, 30% Chinese, 10% Indians and 5% others; e.g. in a football or hockey team, in companies and at pasar malam. Sadly, due to religious barriers we do not find a healthy ethnic mix in places of worship, and at Chinese and Indian restaurants.

I think it is religion which separates the people of Malaysia most because it only unites people who share the same faith.

Another important factor which causes disunity is the policy of dividing citizens into 'bumiputras' and 'non-bumiputras'.

Let us try to overcome these two barriers and promote multi-ethnicity in as many situations as possible. Let us discourage mono-ethnic groups like the Kinta Indian Association (KIA) football team, the All-Malaysia Indian Progressive Front (AMIPF), UMNO, the MCA, the MIC, the various Kadazan, Bajau and Dusun political parties, and the various ethnic-based Chambers of Commerce.

In order to achieve true stability in Malaysia, policy-makers should try to discourage ethnic and religious polarization.

LEE HOO ENG  
Sungai Petani

### IS ALIRAN TRYING TO PLAY GOD?

We have always enjoyed reading Aliran Monthly. The issues it highlights and tackles and its concern for truth, justice and fairness is something that all right thinking Malaysians will stand for and uphold. This explains the broad support that Aliran and your monthly publication has been receiving.

But in A.M. Vol. 10 No. 2, I detect something which is of concern. On page 14, under the heading 'Amend,

the Scriptures' you quoted the following words seemingly attributed to Jesus Christ: 'The Scriptures, like the Sabbath, are for man,' he said, 'Not man for the Scriptures.'

This is, firstly, a clear distortion. To misquote and further attribute this to someone who clearly did not say such a thing is indeed wrong.

Secondly, even though the quotation may have been said or written by someone else, it is most unfortunate that Aliran should publish this in its official organ. It is being insensitive and not taking into cognizance the multi-religious character of our society. Aliran, I am sure, respects all religions but to print something which a religious leader did not say is tantamount to sacrilege. Moreover, allowing something untruthful to be printed in your official organ means that Aliran is not being fair. Further, it hurts the religious sensitivities of a certain religious community in the country.

Thirdly, is Aliran now trying to play God? Is it trying to tell the followers of a religion to change their Scriptures? Aliran is going into an arena where it needs to exercise care and respect for others. It would seem that Aliran is now trying to espouse universalism and a universal religion and others whose views may be different are not tolerated. The charge of being intolerant and bigoted can sometimes cut both ways!

There are many religions in the world and each has its own teachings and emphases. Each has a right to commend to others its own uniqueness and differences. But let us not try to tell another religion what it should have and what it should do, like amending its Scriptures.

It may be wise for Aliran to leave this area and to concentrate on what it does well, that is, common problems and issues affecting our nation. For this Aliran can continue to count on many supporters and partners.

DANIEL HO  
*Petaling Jaya*

*Editor's Note:*

*A.M. regrets the distress which the quotation may have caused to some Christian readers. A.M. obtains its quotations from a wide range of publications and there was no ulterior motive in selecting that particular extract.*

*Aliran is not trying to play God. We are instead emphasizing the common and beautiful spiritual values present in all the great religions of the world, whilst not denying in any way the doctrinal differences which exist. We hope that by promoting greater inter-religious understanding and appreciation of the common values we share, we can move on to a more meaningful level of unity.*



Muslim women: Polygamy was never intended as Islam's solution to man's lust.

## QURAN'S INTENTION IS TO RESTRICT POLYGAMY

**W**e applaud the Selangor Shariah Appeal Court's judgement on Aishah Abdul Rauf v. Wan Mohd Yusof Wan Othman. The grounds of judgement reflect the true word and spirit of the Qur'an.

We would like to point out the popular misconceptions surrounding the Qur'anic verses on polygamy.

1. Many men believe that polygamy is a God-given right enshrined in the Qur'an.
2. Many believe that Islam, by allowing polygamy, has found the ideal solution to men's alleged insatiable sexual drive.
3. Many also believe that if a woman allows her husband to take on a second wife, she is assured of a place in heaven.

The Aishah v. Wan Yusof case has brought to public debate these misconceptions which have been mistakenly elevated to be the word of Allah. Let us point out what the Qur'anic verses on polygamy actually say: "If you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three, or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one." (4:3). A subsequent verse states: "You are never able to be fair and just between women even if that were your ardent desire" (4:129).

It is clear from this verse that:

First, the Qur'an does not give men the blanket right to have more than one wife. Polygamy is NOT a right, but a responsibility to ensure that social justice is done to orphans. What Allah has granted is in fact a restriction on the existing practice of that time when men could marry as many wives as

they wanted.

Second, because polygamy is not a right, Allah placed conditions on its practice. There is an overriding concern for justice in this short verse. Conditions are set to ensure that justice is done.

Condition A: Polygamy is permitted within the context of war and orphans. It is permitted only if the men fear that they would not be able to deal justly with the orphans.

Condition B: The man who wants to be polygamous must have the capacity to be fair and just to all his wives. The verse is a call for just conduct towards women, not a right for men to fulfil their alleged lustful desires or their ego. And just treatment here means more than a man's financial capacity to support more than one wife. He must be fair in all ways, including the time, support and companionship he provides to the wives and children.

Condition C: If the man fears he cannot deal justly with all his wives, then Allah advocates that he should marry only one as this will prevent injustice. This is explicitly stated in the verse.

Third, it is often forgotten that there was a historical social context within which the verse was revealed. That context was a period of tragedy in Islam after the battle of Uhud when dozens of men from the still formative Muslim community in Medina were killed in one day. Numerous women and children were left without support. To deal with this problem, Allah revealed the verse permitting men to be polygamous. Given the tragedy of the battle of Uhud, Allah could have sanctioned the existing practice of unlimited polygamy; but instead, while allowing men to be polygamous, Allah restricted the number to four.

We wish to emphasize that the clear intention in the Qur'an is to restrict polygamy. Unfortunately, in practice, the restrictions imposed in the Qur'an have often not been applied and the context within which the verse was revealed has been completely overlooked.

By stressing the need for just conduct toward women and the need for equal treatment of each wife, and recognizing the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of doing so (4:129), this verse cannot be seen as promoting polygamy. The verse, in fact, advocates monogamy as the original and ideal state of marriage in Islam.

There is also nothing in the Qur'an to support the popular misconception that women who allow their husbands to take a second wife will go to heaven. As far as our research shows, no authoritative *hadith* exists to support this misconception. Nevertheless, this belief is often used to persuade women that it is their religious obligation to accept their husbands' polygamy. This is a

destructive tactic to manipulate women into feeling that they would be bad Muslim wives if they object to their husbands' polygamy.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that it is reprehensible for Muslims to say that polygamy is Islam's solution for men's alleged unbridled lust. Islam teaches self-control, self-discipline and self-purification. The solution to an immoral society, whether in the West or in the Muslim world, is NOT polygamy. The solution, as found in the Qur'an and the *hadith*, is a change of attitude from indulging in promiscuity to one of self-discipline and respect for the opposite sex.

We urge our sisters and brothers in Islam to go back to the Qur'an and read its words carefully. To allege that the judgement of the Selangor Shariah Appeal Court is against *Hukum Syara'* is a gross denial of the true intent and spirit of justice so insistently enjoined by the Qur'an.

DAUGHTERS OF ISLAM  
Kuala Lumpur

## NEW SEMESTER SYSTEM "A TOTAL NIGHTMARE"

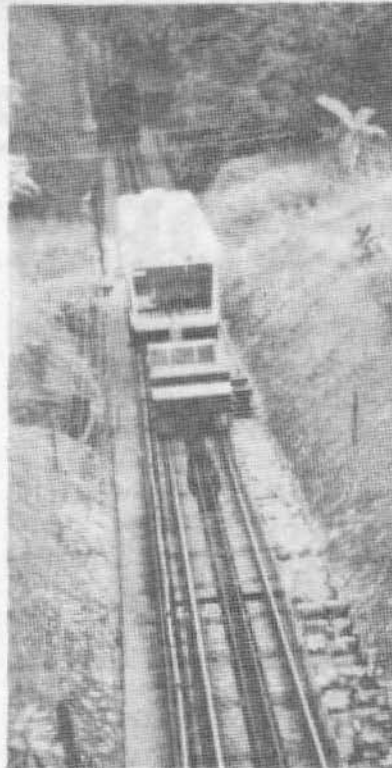
It's funny no one ever bothered to ask students how they feel after having gone through almost eight months of the so-called "new semester system"? Frankly, I have not yet seen anything good about it; and I am sure most parents still have doubts about the new system.

The semester system is not alien to me having studied in a public school in the US a few years ago. But by comparison, our system is a total nightmare. It is pointless for me to elaborate. I feel it is best to leave it to parents to find out for themselves from their children. Those with weak hearts should have some medication ready!

Education is not "play-doh" which can be moulded and shaped to suit personal whims and fancies. The survival of future generations is dependent upon an effective education policy. We simply cannot afford to allow certain half-baked politicians to have the prerogative to decide the type of education system that our country should follow. Our educationists must stand up and speak their piece. Our politicians are not the experts.

I still have a few years to go before completing my secondary school education. I urge all responsible parents, educationists and others to act quickly for the sake of their children's future.

HAIDER  
Kuala Lumpur



Penang Hill: No 'development', please.

## DR LIM'S PLAYGROUND ON THE HILL

Inflation in our country must be really bad. I came to this conclusion a few weeks back after the Chief Minister of Penang, Dr. Lim Chong Eu had made a certain statement in the press.

Dr Lim said the proposed \$350 million project to turn Penang Hill into a top class tourist resort *will not* upset the ecological system (The Star, 4 Aug, 1990)!

And I thought that M\$350 million was a lot of money! One could actually build a hill with that kind of money. I was under the impression that our government had the inflation problem under control. Imagine, spending \$350 million with so little impact on the environment. Wow!

Enough of sarcasm. Let's talk straight. How can the people who carried out the environmental impact assessment (EIA) and Dr Lim expect the public to believe that this project (which includes a water world, a Disneyland-type theme park, a five-star hotel and a summit acropolis) will not have adverse environmental consequences? Makes me wonder which 'lucky' company will be getting this juicy privatized project.

Dr Lim even contradicted himself in the same press statement which was issued in response to the Consumers

Association of Penang's (CAP) criticism of the project. He said, "CAP must realize that the state is constantly aware of the need for the conservation and preservation of the environment..."

If destroying flora and fauna is called "conservation and preservation of the environment", then the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki should be called "a show of love for the Japanese"!

I am concerned over this issue because I visit Penang Hill every year to savour its natural beauty and cool atmosphere. The Penang government should learn to *enhance* the natural attractions of the hill instead of wiping them out and replacing them with man-made 'attractions'.

Being a regular visitor, I would recommend a few improvements:

1. Have more and cleaner public wash-rooms around the hill.
2. Distribute better and more detailed route maps and information as the current ones are confusing and not very informative.
3. Provide more information on where visitors can stay.
4. Upgrade the stations and other old equipment (as proposed by the state).

I hope the state government and Dr Lim will take the protests and suggestions of the public into serious and careful consideration. The people of Malaysia today are no longer an ignorant and indifferent bunch of people who simply swallow whatever is said by their elected representatives and unproven EIA reports.

THE WATCHMAN  
Kuala Lumpur

## JUSTICE MUST BE SEEN TO BE DONE

I am not in a position to evaluate the former Lord President's legal decisions, his capability or his behaviour. But the manner in which he was dismissed was obviously wrong.

Even the most fervent supporter of the establishment, who may feel that justice was done, cannot believe that justice was seen to be done.

This is not a matter of politics. It affects Malaysia's reputation in the world. Justice and fairness, which had been nurtured over so many years, have been affected. The diplomatic silence of the international community has merely masked their real feelings on the subject.

A. CLARKE  
Johor Bahru

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**I**t would be appropriate to commemorate Earth Day by reflecting on the spiritual significance of nature. This is important because we often *perceive* of our lives as being separate from nature. The unuttered notion in our minds of the self-sufficiency of human existence is a prejudice that has to be dispelled.

It is partly because of this self-centred notion of self-sufficiency that it has become easy for man to exploit nature in ways that degrade and dissipate it. There is pollution on an extensive scale wherever urban industrial man has appeared. There are risks of depleted natural resources just as there exists man-induced extinction of species. There is even a real fear that the total human impact on the en-

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The relationship between man and the environment must be one of mutuality and respect, says TONG VENG WYE. In this article to mark EARTH DAY, he stresses that sustainable development is the key to environmental conservation.

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vironment is great enough to produce irreversible global changes in climatic patterns. In short, nature is being abused by contemporary man.

## SPIRITUAL SANCTION

In different ways, the major spiritual traditions of humankind

express man's duty to relate to nature with care and respect. This is true of Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism and Christianity is no exception.

In the Christian tradition, God is brimming with love and concern. Man is created in the image and likeness of God (in his rational, moral, social and spiritual qualities). The existence of nature is also the result of the Creative Will of God. Thus, it becomes clear that man and the environment should have a relationship of mutuality and respect, not one of destruction of one by the other.

God, out of love, has given the human being 'dominion' over 'every other living thing that moveth upon the earth' but that does not mean that man is entitled to dominate nature and do as he pleases. It is dominion imbued with responsibility.

In Genesis 1:28, we are told to have dominion over other things but at the same time to also replenish the earth! That is a clear environmental ethic as can be. Since the ultimate owner and originator of the world is God, we cannot but be tenants or stewards of sorts. This simply re-emphasizes man's duty of care and responsibility for the natural environment which ultimately is not his to own.

Perhaps, the pinnacle of a Christian environmental ethic, lies in the idea of God's vicarious

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...man and the environment should have a relationship of mutuality and respect, not one of destruction of one by the other.

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'Rice dance' in Sarawak



reconciliation of human sin through Jesus Christ. If we understand the word sin to also mean 'estrangement', then we would see that reconciliation stretches to touch not just the sin in our relationships with each other, but also in our relationship with nature and all things; and ultimately, reconciliation with God. For as stated in Colossians 1:20, 'And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven'.

Let us examine how contemporary man can relate to the environment in ways which are neither abusive nor irresponsible. This will lead us to the idea of sustainable development.

It would be convenient to treat the idea at two levels — one, the alternative approaches to technology, energy and resources, and two, the attitudes in people.

## AGRICULTURE

Let us consider agriculture. It is common knowledge that modern methods of farming are heavily dependent on petrochemical fertilizers and pesticides. These days we recognize that green, healthy, leafy vegetables or bright red and shiny apples may not be what they appear to be. For the shine is quite probably accomplished through extensive use of inorganic compounds which can have long term harmful effects for human bodies if consumed.

The combined pressures of product marketability, maximization of farm production output and certainly, profitability, have led to the heavy use of such inorganic compounds. In fact, there are farms in certain countries where the land has been so intensively cultivated for the maximization of production and profits and with so much artificial fertilizers, that the original soil has been depleted to the point of being incapable of sustaining crops without an abundant application of artificial fertilizers.

The alternative to this is organic farming. While it may

not be possible to eliminate the use of artificial fertilizers, organic farming methods do help to reduce significantly such dependence. For example, a return to the age-old practice of multiple cropping, enhanced by the benefits of modern agricultural science, can help soil retain its integrity. For whereas artificial fertilizers once applied can be leached away — and incidentally, leaching agricultural run-off is a serious environmental threat in itself — the organic fertility accrued to soil by the planting of certain crops is something that becomes an integral part of the soil. If one wishes, this can be seen as a means towards the biblical 'replenishment of the earth'.

Organic farming emphasizes the importance of timing in the planting and harvesting of crops in order to optimize the natural conditions to which the crops are suited. Such farming would shift the focus of research from petrochemical pesticides to biological methods of pest control. Nurturing the growth of a particular predator species which is gentle to the crops, but which is inimical to the existence of damaging pests, is one way of biological control. The development of crop strains resistant to specific pest attacks, is another.

Organic and biological farming thus seeks to work *with* nature instead of *against* it. It seeks to replenish nature as we use it instead of depleting it.

## ENERGY

Our most important source of energy today is in the form of non-renewable fossil fuels. Coal, oil, gas — these are abundant on earth but they are not undepletable. There must come a time when they will be exhausted. In fact, it has been forecast that oil supplies will not last long into the next century. It is not feasible to think of alternative energy sources which can fully replace fossil fuels. But, alternatives do already exist which are viable as complements to existing fossil fuels, and which hold the promise of being developed into full blown alternatives.

Renewable alternatives which are already being used to varying extents include solar energy, biomass fuel, wind and hydro-power, as well as tidal and geothermal energy. Power through nuclear fission too (not exactly a renewable alternative) may have a place, except that it is fraught with operational risks and indisposable nuclear wastes which represent very major environmental threats. Nuclear fusion on the other hand, offers much safer and cleaner prospects but it remains a dream that researchers continue to pursue. But once achieved, sea water can become the new material for energy production. In any case, there already exists one sure way of obtaining energy from a source which is not really new. This is conservation. The oil crisis of the seventies demonstrated how much extra energy could be extracted just from the implementation of conservation measures based on existing sources. It has been estimated that in the oil crisis of 1973 — 78, 95% of all new energy supplies in Europe came from conservative measures. In the United States, the figure was 72%.

The unspoken assumption in energy discussions is that as the future unfurls, energy needs will escalate. Burgeoning populations and increased consumption will almost certainly ensure this. But in a sense the need is not for more but for less energy. It is a fact that although the developed world is a numerical minority on earth, in terms of energy consumption it takes up a vast and disproportionately large share of the world's energy. This points to one fact (other than that of its glaring inequity), that affluence characterized by indulgence and wastefulness leads to prodigious energy consumption. Obviously then, the need is to curtail our greed for indulgent consumption, and not for more energy to fuel that greed.

## TECHNOLOGY, POVERTY AND DISPARITY

The inequity of global energy consumption hints of the next point, namely that of ine-

quitable access to technology and hence development. The reality of the contemporary world is that physical and material development are accomplished very much through technical means. From basic and affordable safe sanitary systems to the launching of recoverable space bogeys, technology pervades. The natural consequence of this is that if technology and its benefits are moulded such that they can be afforded only by the wealthy, then technology would be contributing to the enrichment of the few and the impoverishment of the many. This, in fact, is what has been happening.

One may ask at this point, what relevance does this have to the environment? The answer is simple and important. When one speaks of degradation of the environment, one is really talking of violence to nature. It is a problem of violence. But as Gandhi said, poverty is the worst form of violence, and that being the case, environmental consciousness cannot remain indifferent to human poverty. In fact, it is one of the pitfalls of pro-environmentalist sentiments that they can obscure our sight from the morass of poverty which engulfs the majority of human beings in this world. For sometimes environmentalism can become a convenient mask to wear. It is impersonal and does not confront us with the human face of suffering. When this happens environmentalism can turn into just a fad. Put differently, it is much easier for the comfortable and the well-off to be simply pro-ecology, than for them to be against the widening chasm between the haves and the have-nots.

That is why alternative technology which not only seeks to minimize energy inputs and polluting by-product outputs, but which also aims to make technology accessible to the poorer segments of society, is technology that is ultimately of immense ecological value. For the tradition of modern technology has been capital intensive, suited to social systems which nurture exclusive centres of capital ownership and accessibility. That is

why, in a sense, the 'Third World pump' which was produced by a research team at Universiti Malaya, affordable and maintainable by the poor, is of infinitely greater human and ecological value than the glorified Proton Limousine, or the mobile cellular phone.

Looking at science and technology in this manner, one can understand why it is so important for the Third World to undertake research with vigour. The realities of Third World environments — poverty and economic disparities — have a crying need for Third World research appropriate to those realities. Sophisticated and expensive technology has its role and place but it is not always suited to the burning social realities of the Third World let alone environmental ones. For it is particularly here that the problems of the social and natural environments have to be bridged, thus raising the challenge several notches. We need Third World leaders, not leaders from the Third World who, behind a veneer of Third World chest beating, are driven by a First World captive mind.

This brings us to the question of people's attitudes.

## VALUES

One could argue that one of the most important changes that is needed, from the viewpoint of ecological consciousness, is to let moderation and simplicity pervade our life-styles. These are spiritual values but they are also very ecological values. The logic is simple. The greater the degree of self-centred extravagance with which we live, the greater the amount of raw materials and energy we consume needlessly; and hence the greater the volume of solid waste we discard. Taken in a tangible way this would mean the difference between driving or aspiring for large luxury cars, and being content with a small or moderate vehicle maintained purely for need and not for status. For it is only obvious that the larger the car, the more fuel (a natural resource) it consumes and the more pollution it produces.

It is really a process of self-education and effort, when at each step we take the trouble to reflect on the ways in which we can conserve resources and reduce waste. This would range from making sure we use both sides of paper or using public transport and bringing our own carrier bags when marketing, to planting and caring for trees or avoiding the use of disposable fast food chopsticks (which of course come from trees).

In a real sense, observing such sensibility in various ways towards our use of nature's bounty, helps maintain humane sanity. For it helps stave off the unhappy transformation of human beings into faceless units bent upon wealth, accumulation and individualism. Values which at the individual level obstruct the fuller development of the human character, and which at the social level, propel competition and conflict instead of cooperation and harmony. These are also values which reinforce conditions of inequality, leading to the forced gravitation of wealth and opportunity into the hands of elites.

It is therefore not surprising that within every nation, gaping inequalities between the rich and the poor are perpetrated; such disparities are also reflected in the existence of developed and underdeveloped nations. The 'haves' in any society invariably inflict damage on the environment to a degree disproportionate to their numbers. They usually belong to the most influential segment of any society. But they also consume the most resources and create the greatest pollution and waste.

That is why a reorientation of values is so important to environmental sensibility. We cannot change what is outside if we do not change on the inside. It would be pointless to discover some unlimited sources of energy tomorrow, if that energy is only used in the same way as yesterday in destroying forests without any sense of guilt. Put simply, we have to bridge our inner environment with the external one. □

# FIGHT ON WHILE THERE IS BREATH

Dayaks Demonstrate Against Land And Forest Policies



On 9 July, hundreds of Sarawakians, mostly Dayaks, held a peaceful demonstration outside the Miri courthouse in protest against the draconian Sarawak Forest Ordinance, Land Code and State policies on Native Customary Rights. The reports and photographs below on the issues and reasons leading to protest were made available to AM by SEE CHEE HOW.

July 9th 1990 will go down in History. It is the day several hundred Dayaks staged a peaceful demonstration outside the court house in the administrative town of Miri. In support were several hundred Dayaks from the nearby squatter areas around the oil rich town of Miri, a sympathetic political party and three native associations. They demonstrated in support of 171 families in the Niah district who were charged under Forest Ordinance Section 21 by the Sarawak Government for the illegal occupation of state land (July 10 Sarawak Tribune). The families had planted cocoa, pepper vines and fruit trees on land they claimed under Native Customary Rights (NCR).

The day will also go down in history as the day of awakening of political consciousness amongst the mainly rural Dayaks. It was in effect their baptism of fire. In the past their demonstrations had been confined to the logging camps and timber roads. This time (quite appropriately after the recent removal of The Lord President of the Malaysian Supreme Court, so don't be surprised at the negative outcome of the case) it was in front of the court house.

The demonstration is part of their fight for land and political power. In a sense it was a day of political liberation, the much awaited mental revolution amongst the dejected and oppressed Dayaks. They no longer depend on politicians (who never deliver anyway) but now they have taken the



Oppressed Dayaks fight for land and political power.

proverbial bull by the horns themselves.

It was indeed a historic day.

The effects of the government land policies on the livelihood and their environment have attracted international attention (*Hit And Run In Sarawak: New Scientist 12th May 1990; Timber Traders Fail To Quell Fears Over The Rain Forests: New Scientist 9th June 1990*) and foreign governments. The local Friends Of The Earth Society (SAM) in the nearby town of Marudi which is actively involved in native issues was awarded the Right Livelihood Award, the alternative Nobel Award in 1988. In March 1990, Harisson Ngau of

SAM Marudi was awarded the Goldman Award for his contribution to conservation. At about the same time, *The Los Angeles Times* (March 19th 1990) printed several pages of editorial on the plight and effects of logging on the Dayaks of Sarawak. The Dayaks thank the world for their concern and support.

Some Dayak politicians criticized the recipients of the awards claiming that only those receiving the awards benefit from the blockades and the demonstrations. These prizes are not beneficial to the Penans, Kayans, Kenyah and the Ibans, they claimed. They ignored the fact that in one Go-

vernment action, a Dayak youngster was killed by the Malaysian Army in a blockade at Long Ikang in the Baram district last year. Prince Charles was not completely wrong in saying that the Government of Malaysia has carried systematic genocide on the Dayaks, yet none of the Dayak leaders came forward to support Prince Charles' statement. The attitude of the present Dayak leaders speaks for itself.

It should be clear from the above that the Dayaks need your direct continual support (bypass their 'political' leaders) with funds and in kind. Write to your MP or to the PM himself!

Below is their letter of appeal:

## From Natives Of Sarawak

# A Letter Of Appeal

Dear Friends,

*We, the natives of Sarawak are appealing to you all to support our on going campaign for the protection of our native lands and forests.*

*We, the natives consist of 37 different tribal groups and 47% of Sarawak's population (750,000 out of 1.5 million).*

*For more than 150 years since colonization by the James Brooke regime, we have been continually struggling to protect and maintain our ancestral land and forests. These resources are slowly being taken away from us in the guise of 'development'.*

*Though we were assured by the previous British colonizer and by the present Government that our native land and forests will be protected through the Native Customary Rights (NCR), their assurances have been but empty promises. Slowly but surely, our rights have been deliberately watered down by those people in power who are in collaboration with the*

*big foreign and local businesses.*

*For three decades since the annexation of Sarawak to Malaysia, our native customary rights (NCR) are no match to the 'Modern Land Law'. Thousands of acres of native lands have been extinguished and declared as state land, national parks, reserve forests and for the purpose of 'modern development projects'. These include large plantation schemes, hydroelectric power dams, commercial logging and other projects which economically and culturally dislocate the native people.*

*These developments, particularly the indiscriminate logging activities, have also deprived us of our means of livelihood and at the same time destroy the environment.*

*Today 9th July 1990, about 200 native families will be tried in court for illegal occupation of state land. This trial is only one of many cases related to the land issue and pending in the courts*

*throughout Sarawak. Since all the natives are fighting for the same cause, we are appealing to all of you to support and join our cause.*

*We are also soliciting for your assistance to project our issues and demands to all concerned groups throughout Malaysia. We hope you can help us reach out to your areas. We also wish to clarify that our issue is not simply an environmental issue. This is a distorted perception of what is really happening in Sarawak as projected by local and foreign media.*

*Of course we care about our environment but the truth of the matter is that our cause is economic as well as political.*

*It is a question of economic survival and the defense of our fundamental rights to live as a people with dignity. It is only when we are able to protect and maintain our land and forests through the assertion of our basic rights that we are able to protect ourselves and our environment.*

# Media & Human Rights

We publish below the "General Conclusions" reached at a Conference on "Media & Human Rights" organized jointly by the International Academy of Freedom and Development of Portugal, the Naumann Foundation of West Germany and the United Nations. The Conference was held at Sintra, Portugal from the 22nd to the 26th of May 1990. It was attended by about 25 participants from different parts of the world. Dr. Chandra Muzaffar was one of the five participants from Asia at the Conference.

— Editor

## PREAMBLE:

This conference reaffirms that human rights are universal and that the concern for, and the commitment to, human rights are also universal. Human rights are indivisible. This means that political and civil rights cannot be separated from economic, social and cultural rights.

1. Human rights and human dignity are rooted in the different spiritual traditions and cultures.
2. Human rights and human dignity should therefore be the basis of a new paradigm of development and change.
3. Since human rights violations are global and not confined to any particular region, meaningful dialogue on human rights abuses must therefore also involve both the North and the South.
4. Human rights and human dignity should be central to a journalist's concerns. As part of this concern, it is vital to protect the freedom of the media.
5. Attempts must be made to develop the journalist's understanding of all facets of human rights.
6. The journalist must display courage and commitment. Freedom must be exercised with responsibility. Self regulation guided by ethical values should be part of the profession. In this connection, journalists themselves should adopt a common code of ethics.
7. Journalists should be provided with formal training in human rights. In addition, courses, workshops and seminars on human rights should be organised for professional journalists and students of journalism.
8. There is need to decentralise the information systems within countries of the South taking into account the need of both the rural and urban sectors.
9. It is important to stimulate the articulation and development of national, regional and international information networks which will increase the effectiveness of NGO's, journalists and other individuals and groups working on human rights.
10. Both established methods of mass communication such as radio and new methods of communication such

as video, posters, drama, song, etc., should be utilized effectively to make people conscious of their rights and of ways and means of realizing them.

11. The South has too long been interpreted for the world by the North with some negative consequences. The South should play a much more fundamental role in interpreting itself to the world.
12. The media in the North has also contributed towards the exposure of flagrant violations of human rights in the South on many occasions with positive results. What is needed among journalists in both the North and the South is the reporting of foreign news and events with sensitivity towards the political, economic, cultural and historical backgrounds of the areas they cover, in order to ensure objectivity, depth and fair flow information.
13. As part of this endeavour, there should be effective dialogue between journalists of the South and the North engaged in common human rights struggles.
14. The mechanisms within the United Nations for the defense and promotion of human rights should be given a bigger role within the United Nations system.
15. Journalists should co-operate with the United Nations in its campaign to disseminate information on human rights. This is important since human rights issues are now taking on a much higher profile. Journalists have a key role in giving forceful expression to this new global concern with human rights.
16. Any human rights struggle must give emphasis to the courageous denunciation of human rights violations wherever they may occur.
17. Journalists who have distinguished themselves in human rights work should be recognized through, for instance, the conferment of national, regional and international awards.
18. Swift and effective mechanisms should be developed to protect journalists who play the role of informing the public of the truth. By so doing, they uphold the fundamental rights of the community to be truthfully informed.

# SEBAB ANGKATAN MENANG BESAR DI KELANTAN

Oleh RAHIM TAHIR

**K**EJAYAAN Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (Angkatan) menyapu bersih 39 kerusi Dewan Undangan Negeri (DUN) dan 13 kerusi Parlimen di Kelantan membuktikan rakyat Kelantan telah menolak kerajaan Barisan Nasional (BN).

Pemerhati pilihanraya menyifatkan pelbagai 'ancaman dan penipuan' yang dilakukan oleh para pemimpin UMNO terhadap para pengundi dalam usaha mereka mencari pengaruh semuanya gagal, malah telah menikam diri sendiri.

BN memberi bantuan basikal, kain batik, kain pelikat, sogokan wang dan lain-lain, tetapi rakyat tetap memberi undi kepada calon-calon Angkatan.

Kesemua calon Angkatan menang dengan majoriti besar. Bagi kerusi DUN, paling besar majoriti undi diperolehi oleh Haji Nik Aziz Nik Mat di Semut Api (6,993), diikuti, Abdul Halim Abdul Rahman di Banggol (6,025). Majoriti paling kecil diperolehi oleh Tengku Alang Tengku Sulong calon Semangat 46 di Gual Ipoh (1,287).

Majoriti paling besar bagi kerusi Parlimen diperolehi oleh Haji Nik Abdullah Arshad di Pengkalan Chepa (17,447) diikuti oleh Hajah Ilani Datuk Isahak di Kota Bharu (15,460) dan Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah di Gua Musang (13,249). Manakala majoriti paling kecil diperolehi oleh Dr Daeng Sanusi



Tan Sri Mohamed Yaacob tewas dalam pilihanraya umum baru lalu.

Daeng Mariok di Rantau Panjang (6,777).

Dilihat dari segi majoriti undi ternyata rakyat Kelantan tidak mudah diperdaya kerana mereka sudah matang berpolitik.

## SEBAB-SEBAB ANGKATAN MENANG BESAR DI KELANTAN:

1. Pengaruh Tengku Razaleigh  
Tengku Razaleigh walau ke

mana jua beliau pergi, mendapat sambutan hebat di kalangan rakyat pelbagai bangsa. Bila kedengaran pemimpin Semangat 46 ini mahu pulang, rakyat awal-awal lagi sudah mengatur program untuk menyambutnya.

Sambutan terakhir paling hangat diberikan oleh rakyat kepada Tengku Razaleigh ialah di kediamannya di Kota Bharu apabila beliau diberitakan akan memberi amanat terakhir sebelum pembuangan undi.

Kira-kira 15,000 orang berkumpul di kediaman Tengku Razaleigh. Pada saat akhir, pihak Semangat 46 Kelantan menerima surat rasmi dari polis meminta majlis perhimpunan tersebut dibatalkan.

Tengku Razaleigh demi menjaga keselamatan dan keadaan terpaksa membatalkan majlis tersebut dengan meminta orang ramai bersurai dan pulang ke rumah masing-masing kerana esok adalah hari pembuangan undi.

Tengku Razaleigh meminta kerjasama penyokong yang hadir supaya mengawal perasaan dan jangan mencetuskan sebarang perkara yang tidak diinginkan. Rakyat yang hadir mematuhi nasihat Tengku Razaleigh dan bersurai.

## 2. Isu Tanjak 'bersalib'.

Isu kononnya Tengku Razaleigh memakai tanjak bersimbol 'salib' telah dimainkan oleh akhbar-akhbar harian secara besar-besaran.

Tetapi Semangat 46 bertindak cepat, dan isu tersebut telah menikam diri BN sendiri. Sebaik sahaja gambar Tengku Razaleigh memakai tanjak simbol palang (dan bukan salib) disiarkan, jentera Semangat 46 secepat kilat mencari gambar Perdana Menteri memakai tanjak yang sama dan mengedarkannya kepada rakyat Kelantan.

Sekurang-kurangnya 10,000 keping gambar PM memakai tanjak yang sama diedarkan kepada penyokong Tengku Razaleigh di Gua Musang dan beribu-ribu lagi di seluruh Kelantan.

Selain gambar PM memakai tanjak, diedarkan juga gambar PM memakai tanjak sedang menari dengan gadis Sabah. Gambar itu diambil ketika PM melawat Sabah sewaktu pemerintahan Berjaya pimpinan Datuk Harris Salleh.

### 3. Isu pita rakaman

Sememangnya rakyat Kelantan khususnya penyokong Pas sendiri telah berbaik-baik dengan pemimpin UMNO Cawangan dan bahagian dengan harapan mereka mendapat pita rakaman kononnya Tengku Razaleigh hendak 'membunuh' Pas. Sebagaimana yang dilaporkan oleh Ketua Penerangan UMNO, Datuk Hussein Ahmad, UMNO akan mengedar 9,000 pita rakaman itu kepada cawangan dan bahagian. Tetapi sehingga saat-saat akhir atau sehari sebelum pembuangan undi, UMNO cawangan sendiri tidak mendapat pita tersebut.

Orang Pas awal-awal lagi menyedari pita rakaman itu satu fitnah.

Ternyata isu pita rakaman itu menikam diri BN sendiri.

### 4. Rakyat Kelantan tolak 'Umpan' BN

Rakyat Kelantan menolak segala umpan untuk memancing undi. Antaranya ialah basikal kepada kanak-kanak miskin, kain pelikat dan batik wanita, wang ringgit dan sebagainya.

Majlis penyampaian basikal paling akhir di Kelantan ialah di sekolah Wakaf Che Yah di mana kira-kira 2000 kanak-kanak dapat basikal. Di DUN Salor, ada penyokong Semangat 46 menerima kain

batik dan sarong. Mereka menjadikan kain-kain tersebut sebagai bendera dan berkibar di pos-pos Semangat 46 dan Pas. Perbuatan itu seolah-olah mahu membuktikan bahawa penyokong pembangkang di Kelantan tidak mudah diperdaya.

### 5. Sokongan Penduduk Cina dan India.

Angkatan di Kelantan tidak sahaja mendapat sokongan besar orang-orang Melayu tetapi juga masyarakat Cina dan India. Ini dapat dilihat di bandar-bandar besar di negeri ini.

Ketua-ketua kaum India dan Cina secara terbuka memakaiencana bersimbolkan Semangat 46, Pas, DAP dan Berjasa.

Semasa hari mengundi masyarakat bukan Melayu ini memberi bantuan 200 kenderaan di Kota Bharu untuk memungkah pengundi. Masyarakat Cina termasuk kaum wanita kelihatan berkeliaran di pusat-pusat pembuangan undi sebagai perayu undi.

### 6. Program Pas Kelantan

Manifesto Pas yang dikemukakan kepada rakyat Kelantan juga menjadi perhatian dan tarikan rakyat untuk menyokong dan mengundi calon-calon pembangkang khususnya Pas. Program Pas bagi negeri Kelantan antara lain mengatakan bahawa masyarakat bukan Melayu diberi kebebasan beragama, mengamal adat dan tradisi mereka, kebebasan dalam bidang ekonomi, jaminan keadilan dan hak mempelajari dan menggunakan bahasa ibunda.

Pas juga berjanji untuk menyelesaikan masalah tanah haram. Para peneroka tanah haram yang diterokai sebelum 1990 akan diberikan hak milik.

### 7. Jaminan Tengku Razaleigh

Tengku Razaleigh ketika berucap pada majlis sambutan Maulud Nabi dikediamannya di Kota Bharu 1 Oktober lalu memberi jaminan bahawa beliau sendiri akan membantu membangunkan negeri Kelantan jika sekiranya tidak mendapat bantuan kerajaan pusat yang di-

kuasai oleh BN.

Kata Tengku Razaleigh rakyat Kelantan tidak perlu bimbang kerana Kelantan sekarang sudah menemui telaga minyak dan emas. Katanya, Kelantan akan menjadi kaya jika hasil bumi itu dikeluarkan dengan sepenuhnya.

Bagaimanapun, kata beliau, kerajaan BN pusat mesti membantu Kelantan kerana Kelantan juga sebuah negeri yang tertakluk kepada persekutuan Tanah Melayu.

### 8. Isu BMF

Isu BMF yang dimainkan oleh pihak tertentu untuk memburuk-burukkan nama Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah juga menyelamatkan kerusi di Kelantan daripada terlepas kepada Barisan Nasional.

Sebaik sahaja isu tersebut dimainkan oleh akhbar-akhbar harian, pihak Semangat 46 secepat kilat bertindak balas.

Mereka mencetak beratus ribu keping risalah "Geng Yang Rompak BMF" dan diedarkan ke seluruh negara. Dalam risalah itu terdapat sekeping gambar mengandungi wajah-wajah Pesuruhjaya Malaysia di Hong Kong, Dr Mahathir, Lorraine Esme Osman dan Kevin Hsu.

### RUMUSAN

Dengan kata lain semua tindakan pihak Barisan untuk memburuk-burukkan pembangkang telah menikam diri sendiri.

Rakyat sudah membuat pilihan dan kerajaan baru Kelantan hendaklah menunaikan segala janji sama ada dalam manifesto atau semasa kempen.

Jika kerajaan baru pimpinan Ketua Dewan Ulamak Pas Haji Nik Aziz Nik Mat gagal mentadbir negeri ini dengan baik, maka rakyat Kelantan tidak segan silu akan menolak pula kerajaan Kelantan dalam pilihanraya umum akan datang.

Kerajaan Pas dan Semangat 46 setidak-tidak semestinya mempelajari apa yang dialami oleh Pas dulu ketika memerintah Kelantan selama 18 tahun. □

*Dipetik dan disesuaikan daripada Watan keluaran 25 Oktober 1990.*

# CURRENT CONCERNS

## THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THE GULF CRISIS

**T**he United Nations General Assembly has just begun its annual proceedings. It is crucial that the General Assembly tries to play a direct, active, dynamic role in averting war in the Persian Gulf. A war, arising from the seven week-old Gulf Crisis, would be a colossal catastrophe for the whole of humankind.

It is important that the General Assembly which, in a sense, is the only international forum for all the nations and peoples of the world, seeks out an independent role for itself in the Gulf Crisis for the United Nations Security Council is now being manipulated to legitimize the dominant might of that one superpower of our time. There has never been another occasion in the history of the UN when the Security Council has acted with such urgency, and with so much determination, to impose its will upon a member state which has, admittedly, violated the UN Charter. And yet far greater crimes against humanity have been brought to the attention of the Security Council. Neither the indignity of apartheid nor the anguish of homeless Palestinians, could persuade the Security Council to draw out every instrument of authority at its command to punish the wrongdoer. One should add that other invasions of sovereign states — including the recent invasions of Grenada and Panama — did not earn the ire of the Security Council.

The Security Council, constantly forced to pay obeisance to its five permanent members, particularly the United States, has never been able to ensure justice in the relations among nations. Caught in a quagmire of contradictions, compelled to practise double standards, it has invariably chosen might over right, and power over principle.

The UN General Assembly, on the other hand, especially after the huge influx of former colonies into the world body, has, on a number of occasions, adopted positions based upon morality and justice. Its stands on de-colonisa-

tion, apartheid, Palestine, Lebanon, the Congo, Vietnam, Kampuchea, East Timor and so on would be cases in point.

This is why in the Gulf Crisis the General Assembly should take the initiative and direct the UN Secretary-General to convene, as a matter of urgency, a UN peace conference on West Asia. All nations in West Asia (including Kuwait), permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council and the UN Secretary-General should participate in the conference.

The conference should, as a preliminary step, try to defuse tensions in the Gulf by asking for the simultaneous withdrawal of both Iraqi troops from Kuwait and the United States-led forces from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. The contentious issues related to the right to certain oil-fields and petroleum-pricing which were partly responsible for Iraq's 2 August invasion of Kuwait should also be addressed. The question of Kuwaiti sovereignty which is far more complex than what meets the eye deserves special attention. The Western media has cleverly concealed from public scrutiny the long-standing controversy about Kuwait's legitimacy as an independent legal entity.

Equally important the proposed peace conference should attempt to provide a just solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Arab-Israeli conflict, contrary to what the United States and British governments would have us believe, is inextricably intertwined with the Gulf Crisis. It is because of this protracted conflict over the Palestinian homeland, that there is so much anger about the American military presence in Saudi Arabia right across the Arab heartland from Tunis in the West to Cairo in the East. It is this unresolved conflict which is largely responsible for the ideological cleavages within the Arab world — cleavages which have always imperilled Arab unity. It is this conflict which has made Saddam Hussein who has neither the humanity nor the compassion of some of the illustrious personalities in Muslim history, a hero of sorts in the eyes of the ordinary Arab. It is because of this conflict that both the United States and its

ally, Israel, fear Saddam and want to cut him down to size. For they know that he is the only Arab leader who has the military capacity to challenge Israel. And Saddam's own recent military moves, including his annexation of Kuwait are not unrelated to the eventual liberation of Palestine, according to certain analysts.

A comprehensive political solution aimed at the root causes of tension and conflict in West Asia, would be the ultimate goal of a peace conference. Even if such a conference does not achieve its objective, it would be better than allowing those who thrive on armed conflict to push the world in the direction of death and destruction.

Chandra Muzaffar

25 September 1990 President

## THE GENERAL ELECTIONS : THE MEDIA MUST BE FAIR

**A**LIRAN is glad that the Prime Minister has finally dissolved Parliament and called for fresh general elections which the Election Commission has scheduled for October 20-21.

Now that Parliament has been dissolved we wish to remind the Barisan Nasional that it is only a care-taker government. Under the circumstances all use of State facilities for party-political purposes should cease immediately. For example, the Barisan Nasional care-taker government should no longer distribute government funds in any form, utilise government vehicles including helicopters in their campaigns or make use of government departments, officers and buildings in any way whatsoever. This is especially pertinent with regards to the Jabatan Penerimaan and the government-owned electronic media. The different political parties should be given equal access to Radio Television Malaysia facilities. At this time this is not occurring.

While this cannot be insisted upon vis-a-vis the privately-owned but Barisan Nasional controlled Sistem Television Malaysia (TV3) and major dailies, nonetheless we hope that their managements will report fairly and responsibly on all competing parties and candidates. Indeed, this is an appeal to all involved in the print media.

It is only when equal access to the media occurs that important issues will be posed, responded to, the rakyat educated, and our elections made meaningful no matter who wins.

We therefore call upon:

- 1) the competing parties and candidates to abide by the various laws and guidelines governing the conduct of elections;
- 2) the Election Commission and the Security Forces to ensure that there will be free, fair, clean and honest elections; and
- 3) the Rakyat to report to the appropriate authorities should they encounter irregularities, and to cast their votes for a government that will preserve Malaysia's fragile democracy and bring about justice and unity among its people.

Executive Committee

9 October 1990

## THE ABUSE OF THE MASS MEDIA

**T**he daily newspapers and the electronic media are being abused in such a brazen, blatant manner by the Barisan Nasional in the current election campaign.

Though the mass-media which the Barisan controls and dominates through direct and indirect methods has always been used by the ruling coalition for its own partisan purposes, its present abuse has sunk to new depths of depravity. Not only does the Barisan use the mass-media to viciously attack the political opposition, it also denies the latter any opportunity to respond to the countless allegations directed against it. In a genuinely democratic election, opposition parties and personalities should also be given the chance to put across their views through the daily newspapers and the electronic media.

It is significant that even when the opposition is prepared to purchase space to publicise its manifesto — a common practice in most parliamentary democracies — the government-controlled newspapers refuse to accept their advertisement. Only one Chinese-language daily in the country carried the opposition Gagasan Rakyat's manifesto yesterday. It is reliably learnt that both Radio and Television Malaysia have also refused to give air-time to the Opposition's

manifesto.

If the present general election is to mean anything to the people, the manifestos of the Barisan and the Opposition parties should be debated and discussed by the general public. The manifestos contain important ideas and ideals on politics, the state of the economy, ethnic relations, human rights and foreign policy. It is only by examining these ideas that the voter would be able to form an intelligent opinion on the choices offered to him by the various political parties.

In the absence of an issue-cum-policy oriented debate, the present election campaign will degenerate rapidly into a slanging match between personalities.

Perhaps this is what the Barisan Nasional wants. It is afraid of an open discussion on issues and policies. Such a discussion will surely expose the Barisan for what it is — a hollow coalition bereft of sound, rational policies which can stand up to public scrutiny.

The Executive Committee

15 October 1990

## RAYS OF HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

**T**he manifesto presented by the Gagasan Rakyat to the Malaysian people contains many principles and proposals which harmonize with Aliran's own ideals and aspirations. Likewise, some of the ideas in Parti Islam SeMalaysia's (PAS) manifesto run parallel to the views espoused by Aliran in the course of its struggle. Indeed, between the Gagasan Rakyat's manifesto and PAS's manifesto, there are many striking similarities.

It is significant that the Gagasan Rakyat manifesto goes beyond general principles and broad ideals such as justice, freedom, equality and unity. For instance, it calls for the establishment of an independent Anti-Corruption Agency accountable to the people through Parliament. It also requires all elected representatives and their nominees to make a public declaration of their assets, liabilities and incomes. The Gagasan manifesto also promises to amend the law to prohibit political donations by businesses and also business investments by political parties.

Aliran is also impressed by the

Gagasan's pledge to ensure the eradication of absolute poverty by the year 2000 and its desire to introduce a guaranteed minimum wage. Gagasan also realises that "instead of privatising the most profitable public enterprises to the politically well-connected, comprehensive reform of the public sector is urgently required to improve morale, productivity and efficiency."

It should also be noted that the Gagasan manifesto seeks "to forge national integration by restoring the rights and privileges promised to the people of Sabah and Sarawak, and by reviewing federal-state relations." It also promises to establish an "independent Council for National Unity" — a proposal which Aliran has advocated since its inception in 1977.

PAS's manifesto contains proposals which are, in many ways, identical to those presented by the Gagasan Rakyat. Like the Gagasan, PAS promises free medical services, interest-free housing and car loans and a review of civil servants' wages and benefits. It also seeks the abolition of the Internal Security Act (ISA), the Official Secrets Act, the Printing Presses and Publication Act, the Police Act and Universities and University Colleges Act. The PAS manifesto pledges to uphold the independence of the Judiciary and to protect press freedom.

It is important to observe that PAS wants to establish a Suruhanjaya Hisbah, which is the equivalent of an Ombudsman, to check malpractices. What is even more significant, PAS spells out the rights of women in its manifesto.

Another striking feature in the PAS manifesto is its clear enunciation of the rights of non-Muslims. Apart from the freedom to practise one's own religion, PAS makes it clear that non-Muslims have access to politics and administration and to educational, social and economic services. And, in line with Islamic doctrine, the PAS manifesto pledges to protect the languages and cultures of the non-Muslim communities.

On the whole, both the Gagasan Rakyat and PAS manifestos seek to establish a just, compassionate, society which upholds freedom and equality and is committed to genuine unity.

The Gagasan and PAS manifestos have a larger significance for the future of Malaysian society in at least three respects.

One, they show clearly that Opposition political parties with different ethnic constituencies and

of different ideological persuasions have succeeded in achieving a very high degree of consensus on political, economic, social and cultural policies and issues.

Two, the consensus in ideas achieved among the various opposition political parties means that they can work together on the basis of certain common principles and programmes. This augurs well for the nation.

Three, the consensus in ideas between the Gagasan Rakyat and PAS embodies an alternative vision of Malaysian society — an alternative which is certainly more just, more humane and more compassionate than what the Barisan Nasional offers.

As an independent social reform movement committed to the creation of a just and compassionate society, founded upon the belief in God, Aliran appeals to Malaysian voters to weigh and consider carefully the alternative choices before them, when they go to the polls on 20 and 21 October 1990.

Aliran for its part pledges that if the Gagasan Rakyat and its other allies like PAS, Hamim and Berjasa obtain power in the forthcoming general election, we will do our best to ensure that the new ruling coalition fulfils the promises contained in their manifestos. If, on the other hand, these parties succeed to reduce the Barisan's two-thirds majority and emerge as an effective opposition, Aliran will continue to persuade them to pursue the principles and proposals that they have committed themselves to.

Aliran, in other words, will remain faithful to truth and justice, without fear or favour, regardless of what the verdict is on the night of 21 October 1990.

The Executive Committee  
16 October 1990

## DON'T RAISE THE GHOST OF MAY 13

**W**e regret that the tragedy of May 13, 1969 has been raised and made use of by the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir in his attempt to win support in the elections. In his speech in Johor Baru on 16 October, he had linked the ethnic riots which occurred with the loss of the ruling coalition's two-thirds majority. According to him this is the lesson to draw from

history. Subsequent to his statement, several other Barisan Nasional leaders have continued to make use of the ghost of May 13 in the same immoral manner. Such manipulation of the May 13 ghost is the BN's strategy to detract from the more important issues that have been raised by the opposition. Raising the May 13 ghost can only heighten ethnic tensions and cause problems. As Malaysians who strongly believe that the multi-ethnic and multi-religious peoples of our beloved country can work together:

- \* We call upon the Prime Minister and all other politicians whether from the Barisan Nasional or the Opposition parties to be responsible and moral, and stop manipulating the May 13 ghost in their campaigns. Otherwise, they stand responsible for any untoward incident which might arise during this highly volatile period.
- \* We further encourage all the people of Malaysia not to be influenced by the scare tactics of such irresponsible and immoral politicians. They should continue to vote for the candidate and party of their choice freely.

Let us prove to the world that May 13 was an ugly and isolated incident in our history. Together we can ensure that the 1990 elections will be democratic, moral and free of incidents.

Executive Committee  
18 October 1990

## DIRTY POLITICS

**A**LIRAN abhors the concerted attempt by the Chairman of the Barisan Nasional Dato Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Secretary-General of the Barisan Nasional Encik Ghafar Baba to communalise the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) issue. The PBS withdrawal from the Barisan Nasional has nothing to do with ethnicity or religion. It is an issue which involves party politics and Federal-State relations.

The various reasons given by PBS President Dato Joseph Pairin Kitingan for the PBS withdrawal from the BN are long-standing grievances in Federal-State relations. These grievances have not been rectified by the Federal Government.

Instead of discussing and deli-

berating on these grievances in a rational manner, Dr Mahathir Mohamad has shown tremendous antipathy towards the PBS. His manipulation of Sabah politics since the PBS came to power in 1985, his sabotage of the legitimately elected PBS government between 1985 and 1986 and his constant endeavour to split Muslim Bumiputras and non-Muslim Bumiputras are proof of this.

Now in the wake of the PBS withdrawal from the BN Dr Mahathir and Encik Ghafar Baba are trying to create the impression that the PBS action is a threat to Malay political power and a challenge to the Malay position. They are trying to project a picture that the non-Muslim forces are ganging up against the Malay Muslims. This is a diabolical, mischievous lie aimed at instilling fear and hatred so that UMNO can perpetuate its power.

It is obvious to anyone that the battle in the coming election is between two inter-ethnic coalitions which are both made up of Muslim and non-Muslim elements. Many of the issues involved in this battle are also non-ethnic. Only a morally bankrupt political leadership would be so desperate as to resort to naked communal manipulation in order to keep itself in power.

Ariffin Omar  
18 October 1990  
Secretary

## CREATING A CLIMATE OF COMMUNAL FEAR

**W**e are deeply distressed by the blatant manipulation of communal sentiments in the current election campaign. This manipulation of deep-seated fears related to community and religion is the work of certain individuals and groups who are determined to perpetuate their political dominance, whatever the costs and the consequences. It is sad that significant sections of the print and electronic media are collaborating with these communalists in creating a climate of communal fear.

The Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) withdrawal from the Barisan Nasional in particular is being distorted in such a manner that a certain community is made to feel that other religious and cultural groups are consolidating their strength in order to challenge

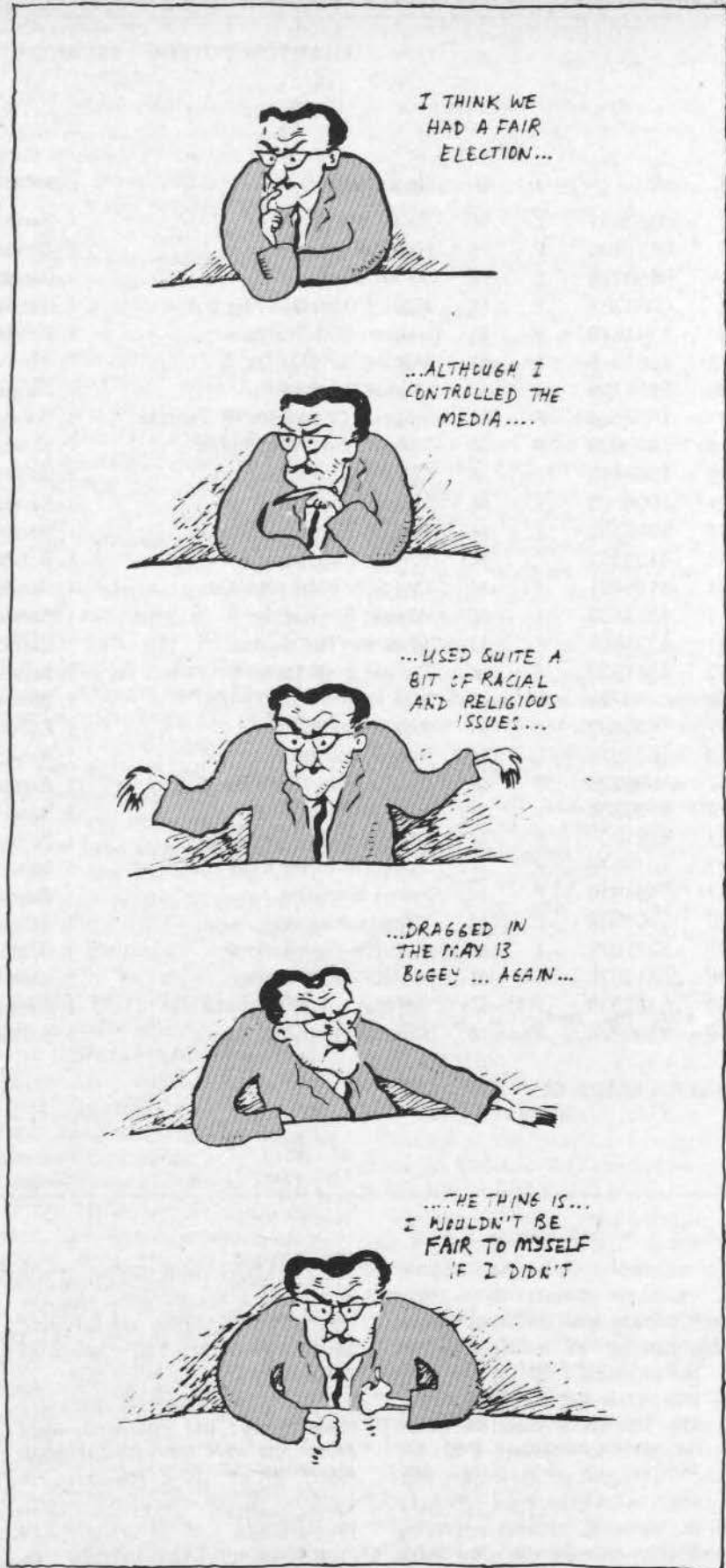
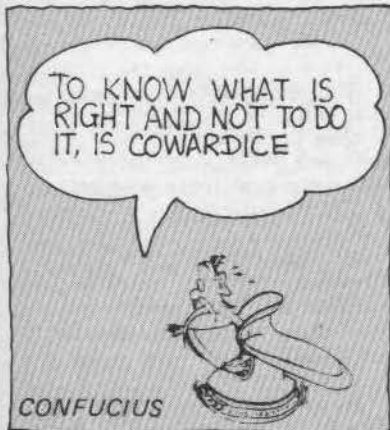
the political position of the community concerned. This is a diabolical lie which has certain sinister motives. The aim is to get a certain community to close ranks behind a particular political leadership and give it undivided support in the coming elections. In the process, politicians who are stoking the communal fire hope to destroy the fragile inter-ethnic, inter-religious alliance forged by their political opponents.

It is morally wrong of any political leadership in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious society to resort to crude, crass communalism in order to perpetuate its overwhelming political power. It is totally unethical to pit one community against another for the sake of winning votes. No one in public life should stoop so low as to sacrifice the well-being of an entire nation for the continued grandeur of one's own power and glory.

We hope that the Malaysian electorate will be sensible enough to reject blatant communal politics of this sort. They should realize that there can be no peace, no prosperity, no stability in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious society like ours as long as irresponsible politicians who are not averse to exploiting base communal sentiments for their own selfish ends, are at the helm of the nation.

The Executive Committee  
19 October 1990

(Except for "The UN General Assembly...." and a small portion of "Rays of Hope...", the rest of Aliran's statements did not appear in any of the dailies. This effectively blacked out all our views on the conduct of the elections. — Editor)



## PHANTOM VOTERS – SEPANG

TABLE 1

Bil.	KP	J	B	Nama Pemilih	Lokaliti	D. Mengundi	1990
24	0487591	L	M	Radin Bin Samah	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
38	0637406	P	M	Habibah Binti Ibrahim	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
44	0690275	L	M	Johari Bin Kasah	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
52	0863389	L	M	Mohd Yunus Bin Abu Bakar	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
76	1141878	P	M	Kalsum Binti Nordin	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
176	2387310	L	M	Mat Ali Bin Mat Daud	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
186	2451705	L	M	Minhat Bin Budin	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
197	2572434	P	M	Roselyn Chand Bee Bt Hamzah	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
219	2820038	P	M	Zaidah Binti W Abdullah	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
220	2908412	P	M	Saadah Binti Mohamed	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
221	2908583	L	M	Manan Bin Maon	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
233	3046302	P	M	Rosnah Binti Haji Mokti	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
355	4138352	P	M	Rokiah Binti Mahfor	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
361	4155491	P	M	Che Sum Binti Abd Aziz	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
384	4224853	L	M	Ahmad Bin Kastam	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
391	4234058	L	M	Ishak Bin Haji Arshad	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
422	4341539	P	M	Zainon Binti Talib	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
426	4349722	P	M	Mek Ramlah Binti Sharif	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
457	4405892	L	M	Wahid Bin Pomiran	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
536	4626978	L	M	Mesran Bin Rasan	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
557	4695225	P	M	Zaleha Binti Mohd Daud	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
578	4799304	L	M	M Yunin Bin Hassan	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
607	488200	P	M	Rohayah Binti Mohd Dan	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
627	4979478	P	M	Saniah Binti Md Lajis	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
657	5134629	P	M	Norlia Binti Din	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
669	5207038	L	M	Kamarazaman Bin Atan	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
689	5322971	L	M	Aziz Bin Abd Rahman	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
738	5613578	L	M	Mohd Shah Bin Atan	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
750	5702839	P	M	Siti Maknonah Binti Marwan	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0
779	5990256	P	M	Norizan Binti Abd Ghani	1, Bandar Baru Bangi	B.B. Bangi	0

JUMLAH BESAR 30

the electoral rolls where the same IC number appears more than once, usually with different names. The problem of multiple entries on the electoral rolls for the same IC number is not confined to the Sepang area. The Election Watch Secretariat also obtained a list for the Sungei Siput parliamentary constituency where there are 289 cases of the same IC number appearing more than once on the rolls. Table

2 is an extract from this list. It will be observed, for instance, that the bottom three entries are different names with the same IC number for the same polling station, Legap.

The tables presented here are extracts of lists prepared after computers were fed with the particulars of all those registered as electors in the respective constituencies and then programmed to print out the relevant irregularities.

On the official rolls, the names are not in the same order as in these tables and hence it is impossible at a glance to spot these problems on the rolls used for polling.

These facts are not just startling, they are disturbing. Why are there so many phantom voters and so many cases of multiple entries of IC numbers? The lists make one wonder how many other constituencies have electoral rolls which

SUNGAI SIPUT POLLING CONSTITUENCY

TABLE 2

PARLIMENT CONSTITUENCY: SUNGAI SIPUT (P 056)

DUPLICATE IC NO LIST

PAGE: 6

NO	POLLING AREA	LOCATION	IC NO.	NAME	SEX
294	05631-Simpang Tiga	007-Heawood Garden	5935932	Usha a/p G Appukuttan	P
209	05631-Simpang Tiga	013-Kampong Muhibbah	5935932	Sufatra Ammar a/p Subanandam	P
953	05608-L K T P Lasah	001-Ran Kem Tanah Laseh	5951335	Nor Zawiah Bt Zawawi	P
996	05632-Rimba Panjang Utara	563-Rimba Panjang L C Area	5951335	Khong Boon Wah	L
132	05630-Sungai Buloh Selatan	001-Sg Buloh	6067159	Cheng Weng Kau	P
304	05631-Simpang Tiga	005-Kg Sentosa	6067159	Liew See Chun	P
194	05623-Jalong Barat	002-Simpang Jalong N/V	6140200	Chong Yoon Seong	L
194	05623-Jalong Barat	002-Simpang Jalong N/V	6140200	Chong Yoon Seong	L
68	05616-Pekan Karai	005-Ladang Penarth	6343225	Savetari a/p Perumal	P
431	05622-Jalong Timor	002-Kg Jalong	6343225	Maharudin B Ibrahim	L
30	05605-Pos Legap	022-Sg Yum	6728177	Atong a/l Busu	L
10	06605-Pos Legap	047-Kg Bihar	6728177	Ngah Bt Pandak	P
2	05605-Pos Legap	019-Sg Temor Fort Legap	6728188	Bedak B Abu	L
3	05605-Pos Legap	019-Sg Temor Fort Legap	6728188	Long B Uda	L
3	05605-Pos Legap	028-Kampong Ulu Legap	6847831	Alang B Adek	L
25	05605-Pos Legap	045-Pos Perwor	6847831	Alang B Pandak	L
12	05605-Pos Legap	010-Sg Legap	6847834	Andak Bt Uda	P
13	05605-Pos Legap	010-Sg Legap	6847834	Andak Bt Along	P
13	05605-Pos Legap	008-Sg Kumris	6847847	Busu B Alang	L
13	05605-Pos Legap	015-Sungei Rengka Fort Legap	6847847	Busu Bt Long	P
14	05605-Pos Legap	015-Sungei Rengka Fort Legap	6847856	Andak Bt Busu	P
15	05605-Pos Legap	015-Sungei Rengka Fort Legap	6847856	Andak Bt Ngah	P
2	05605-Pos Legap	007-Sg Kernam	6847879	Adik Bt Ngah	P
46	05605-Pos Legap	022-Sg Yum	6847879	Adik Bt Adik	P
44	05605-Pos Legap	022-Sg Yum	6847879	Alang B Itam	L

are similarly defective. Just before elections are called, the Prime Minister himself announced that UMNO was trying to trace phantom voters in Kelantan; later it was disclosed that an estimated 27,100 such voters were on the Kelantan rolls.

The Election Commission allowed the country to go to the polls knowing that the electoral rolls were defective. Why did it prepare the new rolls in such haste that they contained all these problems? Arguably, the Commission should have been more thorough in checking the rolls and only issued the new set when it was sure that

these rolls contained no major defects. Was the hasty preparation of the rolls the result of being pressured into getting the rolls ready quickly for a snap general elections? The Commission chose to go ahead with the elections even for seats for which it had evidence that the list of electors was defective. Was it more interested in quick elections rather than clean rolls and fair polling? These troubling questions leave one wondering whether the independence of the Commission is as nominal as that of the Judiciary.

At the end of the day, electors are left asking whether the repre-

sentatives chosen would have been the same had the electoral rolls not been defective. Did each voter have an equal opportunity for choosing his representative, or did the preferences of some count for more than one? Were the elections fair? An independent Election Commission should not have acted in a manner that allowed these questions to arise. For the public to be assured that all electors had an equal say in voting, we need an Election Commission that is answerable to the King and the people, and does not appear to be under any undue pressure from any branch of the government. ●

# IRREGULARITIES ON THE ELECTORAL ROLLS

**A** condition for elections to be fair is that the electoral rolls containing the list of people eligible to vote must be clean. Numerous complaints concerning the electoral rolls used for the General Elections held on October 20-21, however, put to question how clean the rolls were. Some complain that though they had registered during the voter registration exercise in March, their names could not be found on the official lists of electors used during polling. These omissions deprived countless eligible voters of their right to choose representatives for

Parliament and State Assemblies.

Slightly more mystifying was the problem of 'phantom voters'. For instance, an Indian lady from Ampang, Selangor received four voting cards (informing voters where they should go to vote) that were sent to her house bearing messages to vote Barisan; the curious thing was that the cards were addressed to Malay names though no one with such names had lived in the house for the 21 years she had been there. There are many other reports of people registered as electors with a certain address though these persons do not actually live there.

These 'phantom voters' include a list of 17 names registered as living at the address of a factory in Penang.

The existence of phantom voters on the rolls was one of the grounds for which Haji Suhaimi bin Kamaruddin sought an order from the High Court to instruct the Election Commission to rectify the rolls for the parliamentary constituency of Sepang and the Selangor State Assembly seats of Dengkil, Sg. Pelek and Batu Laut. The judge threw out the application, ruling that the matter had to be first brought to the attention of the Election Commission and Haji Suhaimi had not done so. However, in his judgement Mr. Justice Datuk Wira Wan Yahya Pawan Teh said "the facts in the case (are) startling".

One of the things that must have startled the judge was that there were 30 names listed as electors living at 1, Bandar Baru Bangi though this is a fictitious address. (See Table 1 for a list of these names.) There were another 38 names listed under the address "2, Bandar Baru Bangi", which is another address that cannot be found. Neither does "3, Bandar Baru Bangi" exist, though it has 32 names of electors who are supposed to be living there. The list goes on from 4 to 14, Bandar Baru Bangi, each address listed as having from 26 to 39 voters. None of these addresses exist. Their appearance on the electoral roll results in a total of 405 phantom voters for this area.

Haji Suhaimi also submitted to the court a list of 573 entries on  
*continued on page 38*



**Voter registration exercise:  
Elections are held despite questionable rolls.**