

08 APR 1996

Bernamea Features

IS OWNING A PRIVATE JET A GAUGE OF MALAY SUCCESS?

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KUALA LUMPUR: On the morning of Friday, March 15, a group of Malaysian government officials, businessmen and journalists were at the VIP room of the Kimpo Airport in Seoul awaiting the arrival of the Malaysian deputy prime minister.

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, on a three-day working visit to South Korea, was scheduled to fly to the south of the Korean peninsula to visit the industrial plants of two companies.

Anwar's itinerary comprised a visit to a plant of Hyundai Precision and Engineering in Changwon manufacturing the K-1 main battle tank and the Daewoo shipyard in Ok Po Island to see the construction of a submarine.

As the party waited for Anwar for the domestic flight to Kimhae airport in a chartered aircraft, businessman Datuk Amin Shah Omar Shah appeared, sporting a broad smile as he entered the VIP room.

"When did you arrive?" asked Datuk Zakaria Said, MP for Kuala kedah and deputy executive chairman of Sikap Project Management Services Sdn Bhd.

"Only just..from KL," replied Amin Shah as he kept his smile and shook hands with all present in the VIP room. He was congratulated for having been conferred the title "Datuk" by the Sultan of Selangor on the latter's birthday.

Amin Shah is one among the "Melayu Baru" (New Malay) entrepreneurs who have emerged out of the blessings of Umno's struggle. He heads several large companies and is engaged in business in the country and abroad.

A point worth noting about Amin Shah's appearance at the VIP room is the way he arrived in Seoul.

"I flew in by private jet, direct from KL with a refuelling stop in Macao," he beamed when questioned by another successful Malay entrepreneur, Tan Sri Abdul Rashid Hussein.

Amin Shah is one of a small group of Malay entrepreneurs who own private jets to enable them to fly to any part of the world on business. Others include Malaysia Airlines chairman Tan Sri Tajuddin Ramli and Renong Group chief Tan Sri Abdul Halim Saad.

"When are you returning to KL," asked Zakaria, who is fondly referred to as Pak Ya.

"Tonight, at 10," replied Amin Shah.

"Can I hitch a ride?" asked the jocular Zakaria, who is also a former Kedah senior executive councillor.

But Zakaria was not joking this time. He and one or two other Malaysian businessmen joined Amin Shah on the flight back to Kuala Lumpur in his company's jet.

This episode at the Kimpo Airport would not even be dreamed of before the New Economic Policy (NEP) was successfully implemented and blessed by Umno's struggle and the support of the party's partners in the Barisan Nasional (BN).

Today, people can hop into the private jets of friends to cross oceans and fly from continent to continent when hardly a decade ago they were only asking a ride in friends' cars to travel to Ipoh or Melaka. What will be the scenario after 2020?

Who would have thought that a Malay businessman would be able to own a jet and fly to South Korea, arriving there in the morning and returning to Kuala Lumpur the same night. Amin Shah's company owns two executive jets.

Undeniably, jet ownership by Malay businessmen has come about through

Umno's industrious struggle not only in politics but also in the economic sector. Umno's struggle is not restricted to the Malays or Bumiputeras but encompasses all Malaysians.

As the backbone of the BN and before that the Alliance, Umno struggles for the nation.

As Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said when commenting on the May 13 incident: "Malaysians who have just experienced riots and killings, realise that these are useless means.

"The best way is by fostering cooperation among the communities and the political parties. Political parties within the Alliance and parties outside the Alliance."

Dr Mahathir said then that Umno leaders felt that they should not overly concentrate on politics. Instead, they should concentrate on national development so that the people can live a more comfortable, peaceful and prosperous life.

"We realise many people feel that a cause of the racial riots in 1969 is the feeling of the Malays and Bumiputeras that they had not benefitted much from independence," Dr Mahathir had said.

He had said they felt that only the other communities had gained wealth from independence.

"As they felt that way, the BN planned on a fair and equitable distribution of wealth," he had said.

With the concurrence of all parties in the BN government, the NEP was formulated and its success is obvious.

"Today, we have Malaysian conglomerates everywhere, and they invest not only in Malaysia but also abroad, even in Europe," Dr Mahathir had said.

Malaysian companies have also bought several European companies with their own funds, he noted.

"We are able to do all these because we have been able to upgrade the capabilities of the communities in our country," he said.

One of the biggest successes is the birth of hundreds, if not thousands, of Malay millionaires, and giant companies owned or controlled by them.

Names such as Amin Shah, Halim Saad, Rashid Hussein, Tajuddin Ramli, Azman Hashim, Wan Azmi, Khalid Ibrahim, Ishak Ismail and companies such as Sapura, TRI, Landmarks, RHB, Arab-Malaysian, Renong, MRCB, DRB-Hicom, Business Focus and many more are not strange names in the country or abroad.

All these would not have happened if Umno had not been established 50 years ago to blow the winds of change among the Malays and other Bumiputeras and all the people of Malaysia.

One has only to look at the luxury cars in the parking bays of the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) during an Umno general assembly. Or the traffic congestion at almost all mosques in large or small towns during Friday prayers.

These are the results of Umno's struggle to raise the economic status of the people, particularly Bumiputeras.-- Bernama