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Anti-graft stance is to be congratulated

John Chai

I WISH to laud Professor Hamdan Ahmad, president of the Federation of Malaysian Consumer Associations, for his allegations that corruption by officers of local councils has caused the steep hike in house prices (as reported on TV3 news on June 11).

The rationale is simple - the cost of corruption, like any other cost, has to be passed on to the customers.

I can understand why the professor had to shirk the question when he was asked to prove there was corruption.

Corruption often cannot be proved as the bribe takers normally take the necessary precautions to avoid detection.

It is often not a one-man show. It is a collusion of junior and senior officers who are all on the take.

In other words there is no control of procedures.

Notwithstanding all the precautions, there are tell-tale signs of corruption and one can often sniff them out.

I also wish to refute the assertion that bribe-givers are just as much to be blamed as the bribe-takers for corruption. Normally they have no choice.

They have been coerced into giving or else made to suffer losses or incur costs by the inordinate delays by the approving officers in considering their applications.

It is a Catch 22 situation. You are damned when you give; you are damned when you don't.

How are the bribes accounted for? Often as entertainment, donations, travels, advertisements and the like.

These are all invariably rejected by the income tax authorities.

Who suffers for this evil? The public as consumers and customers.

Like most Malaysians, I watched our beloved Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, shedding tears at Umno's last general assembly when he denounced money politics in Umno and I was most touched by his resolve to tackle this social evil.

Since then he and his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim have spoken very strongly on the matter and action has been taken against certain leaders.

Your esteemed paper has also joined in the crusade and I particularly like your Other Thots column where the columnist tackles the subject with a zeal which can only benefit the fight against corruption.

I also wish to offer my humble suggestion in tackling less monumental corruption.

One of the most effective methods in catching the bribe-takers is for the ACA to go into the "pastures" incognito, just like the former executive chairman of a bank did when he wanted to gauge the efficiency of the operations of his bank.

He was served like any other customer, sometimes efficiently and sometimes inefficiently. Following his observations, he was able to solve shortcomings.

In Kuching, one of the most "hated" government agencies is the Road Transport Department.

Many complaints have been voiced against JPJ testers for bribe-taking but no action has been taken against the errant officers.

My suggestion to the ACA is to go incognito as commercial drivers to the JPJ testing sites where body language is the norm for a bribe demand. This

explains the high cost of road transportation in Sarawak.

Often one hears that approval has been given for a developer to build, say, an 18-storey block of flats.

When the building is finally completed, one sees not an 18-storey block but a 22-storey or more block.

We see a few of these buildings in Kuching, one of which stands glaringly in a very congested part of town with schools, a wet market, road junction, narrow road and heavily populated housing estates where such a tall building should not have been approved for construction in the first place.

Yes, please continue with your exposure of corruption and hopefully we shall see a significant decrease of this social evil.

John Chai

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