

31/10/2003

A L-O-N-G wish list for Pak Lah

DEAR Pak Lah,

When 18 YouthQuake readers had the privilege to meet you at your office in Putrajaya last month, you made a request: you wanted young Malaysians to tell you what they hoped for from their next Prime Minister.

Well, the response was overwhelming (as if you didn't know! You the MAN now!). E-mail and letters have been flooding in since last week, with hundreds of wishes from excited teens, and some young-at-heart adults too. So here is the wish list you asked for.

Congratulations on your appointment. We wish you the very best!

* On entertainment

PLEASE allow more international artistes to perform in Malaysia. Currently there are a lot of restrictions placed on artistes who want to hold concerts. For example, when Linkin Park came here recently, it had to agree to comply with a long list of rules and regulations before it was allowed to perform, like ensuring the members kept their shirts on.

They were not allowed to wear shorts and jumping about was forbidden. I feel that we should relax some of the rules and regulations pertaining to artistes performing in Malaysia because this will only put them off from visiting our country.

By the way, did you know that 20,000 were at Stadium Merdeka when Linkin Park performed and everyone - Chinese, Malays, Indians, foreigners and others - had a great time together. A natural way to muhibah, don't you think?

- Azlina Mohamad Kamal, 18, KL

I WANT Britney Spears to come to Malaysia. Another thing, we should upgrade our public transport system. I have to wait 30 minutes just to take the bus every day to and from school. A more efficient transport system please.

- Wing Li, 16, KL

MORE concerts! Tolonglah setuju (please agree) if Linkin Park agrees to perform here again!

Concerts should be held on weekends, not on weekdays when most people have to go to school the next day. It is most likely that some people skipped school the day before, on the day, or the day after to attend the concert.

- Bonnie Chai, via e-mail

PLEASE don't dub TV programmes especially anime (Japanese cartoons). Once dubbed, everything sounds so fake and the feel is gone. I'm an anime fan, but I cannot stand the fake voices especially the laughs). It spoils everything. I am pretty sure many other teenagers feel the same way. Look at programmes in Bahasa Malaysia. They have English subtitles. So why can't foreign-language shows be like that? I suggest that all shows in foreign languages should have subtitles instead of being dubbed.

- Law Ji Min, via e-mail

MY name is Ridhwana Amalina Rusli. I am 15 years old and I am from Kota Baru.

Here's my wish list:

1) Bring more rock concerts to Malaysia.

2) When Linkin Park comes here again to perform, please give it the green light!

- Ina via e-mail, Kota Baru

AS you know, the Censorship Board edits or bans nearly everything that involves half-naked women, kissing scenes and swearing. Instead of editing out these elements, we should classify the shows into broader categories.

Now, we have only U, 18SX, 18SG and 18PL.

Despite the 18SX label, the Censorship Board still edits the above-mentioned elements, which are seen as budaya kuning from the West. What is the point of categorising these programmes then? I think it's an insult to those over 18, who are mature enough to differentiate between right and wrong.

I would like to propose the U rating for the general public, PG-13 for those aged 13 and below, and 18SX for everyone aged 18 and above. Please don't edit any scenes from the above-18 category. We pay RM10 to watch a movie in the cinema. Imagine sitting through two hours of constant bleeping and edited scenes. What is there to enjoy?

Which brings me to another issue, the ban imposed on the movie Daredevil. A lot of people were upset with this decision which was based solely on the word "devil". First of all, you are not supposed to translate the word literally.

The movie was banned simply because "devil" translates to syaitan in Malay, when "daredevil" means someone who is brave enough to do something.

It has made Malaysia a laughing stock, what more with the rules imposed on Linkin Park governing what they should not do onstage.

It's embarrassing to read online message boards where everyone is saying how stupid the country is. You should know though, that there were Malaysians who defended our country.

In an episode of family sitcom Malcolm in the Middle, the word "breasts" was bleeped. Come on, breasts are a normal thing - all women have them. Why should it be censored? It's nothing to be ashamed of.

Keeping people in the dark by censoring words like "sex" and editing out kissing scenes and the like will make those who are not exposed to these elements curious and want to experiment for themselves. What happens next?

- Molek Kasa, via e-mail

* On education

I URGE you to build more local universities in specialised fields of study like engineering, and liberal arts colleges. Specialised training should be given to students earlier so that time is not wasted learning subjects that have no practical value to them. School hours should be changed, preferably from 9am to 3pm every day.

- Kartika Muthu, 17, KL

THEY should reduce the number of subjects taught in school so we can concentrate on them better. I believe Pendidikan Moral and History are irrelevant and a waste of time to a science student. We should add subjects like Biotech and others in specialised science fields.

- Mageswary Arsohgah, 18, KL

ALTHOUGH our country produces many high-achievers, we seem to lose many of them to other countries, especially Singapore. I hope we can stop this brain drain as soon as possible. Provide more scholarships to high achievers; don't wait for other countries to offer them free education. If this goes on, we will lose more of our top engineers, scientists, researchers and the like.

- Kaartik Palaniappan, 21, Kuantan

SCHOOLS should focus more on hands-on learning instead of textbook-based teaching. That way students will be able to better apply themselves in the working world. Some things I've read in the textbook work only in theory but not in practice.

- Adrian Low, 17, Klang

I THINK there should be a change in the way students are taught. At the

moment, we are following the British education system, but I feel we should change our system to include some aspects of the American school system. Under the British system, we seem to do a lot of memorising and I hate memorising. In the American education system, critical thinking and analysis are encouraged, and students are expected to participate in class discussions and debates. I think it would be useful for Malaysians to learn how to think critically and to question whatever information they're given instead of just memorising a long list of facts.

- Beulah Malathi, 17, KL

PLEASE abolish the need for school uniforms! The weather is so warm. It can be pretty uncomfortable and difficult to concentrate on the lesson if we're always perspiring under our shirts that do not absorb sweat.

- Jasmine Elanie, 16, KL

THERE should be more funds set aside for education to assist students from poor families.

At the moment, many students are even struggling to pay the most basic school fees. The problem gets worse when it's time to apply to colleges and universities. To combat this problem, the Government should offer more scholarships to those in need of financial aid.

- Sadatul Shima Abdul Hamid, 18, KL

PLEASE reduce the prices of imported books and other reading materials or give us an allowance to buy academic books which can be very costly.

Offer special rates to students who use public transport such as the LRT, buses and taxis.

If possible, the Government should provide an allocation for students to travel to places within Malaysia during school holidays as part of the "Cuti-cuti Malaysia" campaign.

Hear us out before implementing any new policy especially if it affects us directly.

Review the allowance for undergraduates who are on government scholarship. We only receive RM345 per month and we can't survive on that especially for us who study in KL.

- Hyginus Lester, Kuala Lumpur

I WISH I did not have to memorise most of my lessons in school. For example, I have to memorise the debit and credit for my Prinsip Akaun. It's a chore, and I don't think there are any businesses that prepare their accounts the way we learn in school. Please help us understand what we learn. I heard on TV that there is a software to learn accounting. Why can't we use that in school?

- Abu Koster, via e-mail

I AM a Form Three student. Since science and maths are taught in English in Form One this year, why don't we teach these two subjects in English in Standard Four in 2005. I think they will benefit because they will then have a foundation studying science and maths in English when they enter Form 1.

- William Kong, 15, Kuala Lumpur

I AM a Sixth Form student who desires to get into a public university next year. My friends in university told me that public universities only offer Internet access in the computer lab and the lab is always filled with students waiting their turn to use the computers.

Sometimes, they are forced to go to cyber cafés outside campus and pay a high fee for slow Internet service.

As an example, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia told its students that they could expect Internet access in their dorm in June. But, November is already upon us and there is still no sign of a telephone line in their room. Students need access to the Net for up-to-date information to help them in their studies. I hope this will be attended to as soon as

possible.

Lastly, keep it up, Pak Lah! You've been doing great.

- Coral Lean, 18, via e-mail

IT would be great if university entrance requirements were based not only on academic results (70 per cent) but on co-curricular activities as well (30 per cent) so that you have students who are all-rounders equipped with the necessary social skills.

- Moveendra Puspanathan, 16, Seremban

I WISH you would cancel the national service programme. I am a girl, and I don't think girls should undergo military training as we are not as strong as the boys. All my female friends feel the same way too. I think it should be only compulsory for the boys and not for girls. I really hope you will consider this.

- Ee Tieng, via e-mail.

* On sports

IT would be great if there were adequate sports facilities in every residential area. My friends and I love playing basketball but we have to go back to school to play. Public courts are usually fully booked and expensive. We need more courts for youths to play.

- Sean Tan, 15, KL

On racial unity

WE want more racial integration! We want a multicultural community living harmoniously - not just on the surface but with deep, genuine effort. We want to be real Malaysians, treated as Malaysians, fairly and without discrimination.

We do not want the present "step-child" feeling or to be treated like second-class citizens. We want all our teachers to treat us equally. We want all bosses to regard our parents, brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts as Malaysians, not as non-Malay, non-Muslim workers.

We want our parents to come home happy and not stressed out over the discrimination at their workplaces. Our parents are hardworking government servants.

We ask that you help Malaysians based on socio-economic factors, not on racial, religious and gender grounds.

Thank you and may God bless and lead you.

- Clarina, 15, and Kenneth Low, 13, Kuala Lumpur.

I AM really glad that you are taking over as Prime Minister. I know that you have been chosen by God to be the head of this beautiful country. I wish you would really set up a task force to help the Indians who are backward in all fields. We will all suffer the consequences if we do not help them. They need help and time is crucial.

Please Pak Lah do something to deliver them from the curse of alcohol abuse and poverty. The Indians have served this country as long as I can remember. My father was a senior conductor in the estates and we have a right to share in the prosperity of this nation, to enjoy the good things that this country has for us.

I believe that this opportunity has been given to me so that I might be the voice of those who want to rise up and be counted as true Malaysians.

I am proud to be a Malaysian and I love this beautiful country where we live in comfort and peace.

God bless all who have contributed to make this nation a prosperous one.

- Theresa Marshall, Sitiawan

* On politics

I WOULD like to suggest appointing a teenage senator to help the Government understand better the problems faced by his peers, particularly with regards to issues like drug abuse. A teenager will be in a better position than an adult to understand these issues.

All this while, we have listened to our problems discussed in Parliament by senior citizens. We are not given the chance to explain our problems publicly and this gives rise to discrimination against the younger generation. Thus I feel it is important to have a young voice heard in parliament.

After all, it is the young who are going to take over the administration of the nation. The old have to give way to the young, but if the young have no place among the old, they will not have anyone to talk to or explain their problems to.

- Fatin Natasha, 16, Kota Baru

* On speed traps and crooked cops

One of the negative aspects in Malaysia, I feel, has been the speed trap cops, who I think should be better deployed to reduce the nation's crime rate.

I'd like to wish you good luck. I think you will make a good Prime Minister with your cool and matured approach.

We look forward to more good things to come.

- Chew Sam Li

* On medical services for the poor

COULD you look into providing better medical services to the public and setting reasonable medical fees in private hospitals. As it is, the latter are charging exorbitant fees. If the Government does not look into this matter and set a maximum limit for all charges, things will get out of hand one day, when the poor would rather die than be admitted into hospital for medical attention. It will be very sad even though we have the best facilities.

- Samantha, KL

* Then there's the all-encompassing wish list

HERE is my wish list:

1. The first wish is concerning electricity conservation. It would be nice if all the lights except the streetlights are switched off at night once a month in KL. This would save energy and lower electricity bills.

2. Please allow more rock concerts here. Not just only rock, it could be hip hop, punk rock, and more by artistes like Jennifer Lopez, Missy Elliot and Eminem. And when there's a concert, it would be good if there is an autograph-signing session, where fans all line up to get their autographs (for free). At the recent Linkin Park concert, I was disappointed because I couldn't get their autographs. I can listen to their songs any day but their autographs are hard to come by.

3. I see many pieces of idle land everywhere. They can be turned into parks. Why leave them idle?

4. Build more skate parks - not just in big cities or obscure places (like the one in Jalan Ipoh, KL). Hey, I have an idea! Build skate parks in every town! Putrajaya doesn't have a skate park yet! I'm a really lousy skateboarder because I can't go to the skateboard parks often to practise. Most of them are too far away and my parents aren't willing to drive there all the time.

5. Set up temporary homes for the many homeless people. Get counsellors to guide them to get suitable jobs to support themselves. And they can leave the temporary home when they are able to stand on their own two feet.

6. I am sure you will lead Malaysia as wisely as Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

- Iman

* Thank you, Pak Lah, for taking the time to read this. We hope you can help us. Good luck in your new job and congratulations!