

Upbeat economy: Ask yourself this
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The relevant economic indicators announcement by Abdullah administration reveals the 'good times' are back for Malaysians. These impressive economic performance indicators are not artificial, but they are deceptive about the well-being of the Malaysian citizens from all walks of life.

The current stock boom has caused the 10 richest Malaysians to be 44.74% richer with their combine wealth of RM103.27 billion. These 10 richest Malaysians practically own wealth equivalent to 35% of the Malaysia's foreign reserves (RM299.8 billion)

This a very clear indication of the mismanagement of the nation's wealth by the BN regime where only a handful of people are controlling a majority stake of our national economy. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer!

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's comments over the weekend that the KLCI would reach the 1,350 level also significantly boosted retail investors' confidence. How could Abdullah make such a precise prediction?

It must be that government-owned institutional investors are obviously being roped in to boost the 'feel good' factor. Money is being pumped into the main 'Index Counters' (about 17 of them) that are heavyweights on the KLCI. If you push up these heavyweight counters, the whole KLCI will move up.

The chain effect is that retail investors are lured into a frenzied buying of penny stocks that also propels Bursa Malaysia's trading volume to its highest ever of 4.7 billion shares, ignoring the fact that many second-liners are indeed on the verge of being made PN17 companies.

On another front, in Malaysia, private finance initiative programmes are just the political gimmicks that transfer the wealth of the nation into the hands of few political rent seekers. At the end of the day, the money has to come from EPF and Malaysian Pensions Fund.

It would be better for government to create professionally-managed public enterprises rather than allowed rent seekers to take over the wealth of the nation or grant them licences to exploit the consumers. High toll rates and increased electricity tariffs have been very unfair to Malaysian citizen and taxpayers.

The Consumer Price Index computation is also definitely a very deceiving indicator that fails to reflect the reality of life that people are facing. A simple 'economy' rice lunch in Kuala Lumpur (rice with two dishes) plus mineral water is now RM6.20. Just a year ago one could have a good lunch for under RM4.50.

The toll from Gombak to Bentong is now RM8 as compared to RM6.50 a year ago. The price of vegetables and fruits have increased more than 50% while a MAS air ticket from Kuala Lumpur to Kota Bharu is now RM245 compared to RM178 previously, an increase of 37.5%.

The CPI is meaningless if the people are consistently under pressure to make ends meet. There are still more than 70% of the urban poor who cannot make ends meet and the majority of them are wage earners and civil servants.

Disregarding the deceptive facts and figures, ask yourselves a simple question: How have the current economic conditions benefitted you?

1. Has your personal wealth increased by 47% like the 10 richest Malaysians?
2. Is your salary increment sufficient to cover the current rise in your cost of living?
3. Do you have extra money to spend and more to save in your bank account?
4. Are you the victim of the forced selling of your long-term investment shares in Sime Darby, Golden Hope, Southern Bank, Johor Port and Malakoff?
5. If the economy is so good, why haven't the government and private employers given big bonuses to ease the financial burden of the people who include about one million civil servants and 11 million EPF contributors?
6. If the economy is so good, why have cars sales decreased drastically and high-rise residence property market over-hanged?
7. Do you think the government has lost its sense of social responsibility as privatisation projects only benefit politically-linked personalities?

The honest answers to the above from the people at large will show that the BN government's announcement that 'good times are back' is deceptive and unaccountable for. It is a classic symptom of a coming general election.

The national economy has to be supported by fundamental increases in productivity, real values and profitability. The illusion of a 'feel good' feeling created by the Abdullah administration will surely fade away.

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