

Paradise for parasites

Malaysiakini.com

November 23 ,2011

by Dean Johns

Malaysia has all it takes to be an earthly paradise. A benign climate, a fertile environment, a wealth of natural resources, a rich mix of intelligent, industrious and amiable people, and some of the world's finest food.

But unhappily the very fecundity of the country and the good nature of the populace also make it a veritable paradise for parasites.

Malaysia's Umno/BN regime has been fattening itself and its cronies at the nation's expense for decades, and eaten away most of the people's human rights, civil liberties and legal protections - the better to feel free to feed its insatiable greed.

As the 13th general election draws nearer and the signs grow that Malaysians are as sick of their parasitical rulers as their fellows in the Arab world, the government is making frantic attempts to convince voters that it is cleaning up its act.

But paradoxically, the more this regime pretends to reform and transform itself, the more its honeyed words are contradicted by its heinous deeds.

In fact, in the past few weeks, far from suspending its parasitical activities, it seems to have been engaging in an outright feeding frenzy.

The most evident examples of this - appropriately enough in light of the fact that Umno/BN views 'ordinary' Malaysians as so many dumb animals to be farmed, fleeced and otherwise exploited - have been events in the stock market and livestock industry.

Those in the know have apparently made a killing in the shares of Tricubes Bhd, the formerly failing company that was mysteriously selected last year as the beneficiary of the 1Malaysia Email project.

Since renamed MyEmail, this project has not proven to be the cash-cow that Umno/BN intended it to be. So recently, Tricubes was - with the usual lack of tender or transparency - given the prize of collecting traffic fines through ATMs and issuing summons information via SMS.

Naturally the price of Tricubes shares soared on this 'surprise' news, no doubt to the delight of insider traders.

Bumper harvest for some

But the 50 percent bonus for Tricubes shareholders was chicken-feed compared with the 2,575 percent feast for those smart enough or sufficiently forewarned as to hold shares in little-known timber-products company, Harvest Court Industries Bhd.

The price jumped from 8 sen to more than RM2 on the news that Mohd Nazifuddin Najib, second son of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, had been appointed to its board of directors.

Nazifuddin reportedly owned 3 million of these shares or 1.7 percent of the company and his business partner Raymond Chan 13.8 percent or around 20 million shares, so the 24-fold increase in price was a nice little earner for them and all others concerned.

And now we all watch with interest to see if Harvest Court Industries gets as lucky as Tricubes when it comes to the awarding of government contracts.

Or 'soft' loans, like the RM250 million in capital advanced to the husband and children of Women, Family and Community Development Minister Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, to fund the National Feedlot Corporation (NFC) .

The full, sleazy story of the NFC is too long to relate here, and in any case it has been common knowledge for weeks, and subject to so much scathing comment that all possible puns and on the subject have, much to my disappointment, long been used up.

But for any reader not yet aware of this scam, highlights include losses of RM7 million in 2008, RM11 million in 2009, expenditure of RM827,000 on an overseas holiday by the family owners in 2009, and the recent purchase of two condominiums for RM6.9 million each.

Shahrizat, who owes her own political position to typical Umno/BN largesse, having been humiliatingly defeated in the 2008 general election and restored to her ministerial position through her subsequent back-door appointment as a senator, has defended her family against charges of malfeasance with the comment that they "work very hard".

Akhairy and shahrizat umnond lots of other Umno/BN fat-cats have rushed to her and her feed-alot family's defence. One of the most prominent of these defenders of the indefensible has been Khairy Jamaluddin, who as we all recall had his early public career funded by ECM Libra Bhd.

As ECM Libra chairperson Kalimullah Masheerul Hassan told the High Court recently, despite the fact that Jamaluddin was a "relatively junior staff" he was also appointed a director of the company when he joined it in 2004.

Kalimullah denied that "preparations were made to bring Jamaluddin into the company as a shareholder on the basis of his relationship with Abdullah (Ahmad Badawi) , who was finance minister at the time".

But he reportedly did concede that "people have connection with businessmen and politicians...the more the relationship the more easy for business to be done. It is good to have someone who has good connections."

As if the whole world isn't aware that good connections are everything in the Umno/BN system of nepotism and cronyism, lots of other well-connected figures joined Khairy in rushing to the rescue of Shahrizat and her family.

The most arrogantly dismissive and arguably least persuasive of these apologists has been Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, who claimed that the government was "well aware of the status of the issue" and declared that "we will not swallow every story concocted by the opposition".

When pressed by an interviewer on whether the government is satisfied with the NFC's explanation of the apparently scandalous state of its affairs, he replied that "that is up to the public, whether to accept it or not".

Terminal infestation

From what I've seen so far there is no sign that the public has accepted this latest in a long, long line of financial depredations committed by the increasingly desperate desperadoes of Umno/BN.

And no sign that the public is falling for the regime's customary diversions. One of its latest schemes to distract attention from its creaming-off the nation's wealth with scams like the NFC, the chain of shops known as Kedai Rakyat 1Malaysia (KR1M) , appears to be just a scam for bilking and milking the poor and needy.

Milk powder sold under the KR1M 'brand' has allegedly been found to contain up to six times the safe level of Vitamin A, and chilli sauce to be contaminated with unhealthy levels of lead and mercury.

And into the bargain, KR1M prices have been shown to be little if any cheaper than those in some respectable commercial supermarkets.

But not satisfied with endangering Malaysians' health and cheating them of their hard-earned money, Umno/BN also takes a terrible toll of public morale.

By tolerating if not supporting such ignorant bigots as Selangor exco Hasan Ali, who revealed a claim by the Selangor Islamic Affairs Department that Christians are proselytising Muslims using "solar-powered hand-held talking bibles".

Almost as ridiculous a departure from reality has been the call by Inspector-General of Police Ismail Omar for the public to provide him and his forces of outlaw and disorder with new ideas on how to reduce the crime rate.

And arguably the most insulting recent diversionary tactic of all is the campaign by Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) chief commissioner Abu Kassim Mohamed, for young Malaysians to be educated and enlisted in the fight against corruption - as if we've all forgotten the still-unpunished killing of the young suspect in MACC custody, Teoh Beng Hock.

In short, Malaysia is dangerously if not terminally infested with Umno/BN putras and other parasites. And the country is never going to become the comparative paradise on earth that it could and should be until Malaysians get up the nerve to finally tell them to get lost.