

**Year of the Drag-on  
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New Year, be it Western, Chinese or any other kind, is traditionally a time for fresh hope and new beginnings. And in keeping with this spirit of optimism, I heartily wish all my Chinese family, friends and colleagues a happy, healthy and wealthy forthcoming Year of the Dragon.

But such wishful thinking, as sincerely as I express it and with the hope it comes true for you and your loved ones, also serves to remind me how frequently our fondest hopes and dearest dreams are dashed by dire reality.

In other words, however optimistic we may be for our own and our fellows' fortunes in the Year of the Dragon, much of mankind is clearly fated to see the same series of dreary old years, or even decades, drag on.

For example, the 1.3 billion inhabitants of the very heartland of the ancient culture that celebrates Chinese New Year, the cynically mis-named 'People's Republic of China', remain captives of a corrupt and self-serving Communist Party dictatorship that has been in force for over half a century.

china internet lawSo that, while admittedly a great many of China's citizens can look forward to a more prosperous year ahead than their Mao Tse Tung-impoverished forbears ever could, they remain largely bereft of human rights, civil liberties and most other protections under the law.

A situation that, despite the heroic efforts of dissidents and growing numbers of protests against illegal land grabs, perilous working conditions and the pitiful earnings of peasants and migrant labourers, is clearly intended to drag on forever.

And the Chinese people's next-door neighbours in North Korea can look forward to even less good fortune in the forthcoming year, having been dragooned into over 50 years thus far of ignorance, slavery and starvation and other horrors by the dire Kim dynasty.

Though founder and 'Eternal Leader' Kim Il-Song went to his celestial reward decades ago, and 'Dear Leader' Kim Jong-Il did his poor, unfortunate people a favour by dying in the now-expiring Year of the Rabbit, the first family appears determined to stay in power forever, or, if you prefer, until Kimdom Come.

1Malaysia mania

Heredity also seems to loom larger than the horoscope, Chinese or otherwise, in determining the political fortunes of Malaysia. The premier country Najib Abdul Razak, is the son of a former PM. Najib's cousin and Home Minister, Hishammuddin Hussein is the son of another PM, and former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad has been strenuously supporting his sons in their various bids for commercial and political success.

This system of nepotism, liberally laced with racism, religionism, cronyism and corruption, has thus far kept Malaysia's Umno/BN regime in power for well over 50 years.

NONEAnd Year of the Dragon or no, the powers-that-be are determined to ensure that this loony situation drags on to the very death. Or as Najib put it to his supporters at the 2010 Umno general assembly, "even if our bodies are crushed and our lives lost, brothers and sisters, whatever happens, we must defend Putrajaya".

Not yet forced to resort to crushed bodies and lost lives, however, he has meantime been defending his and his coalition's occupancy of the nation's capital with massive publicly-funded public relations

campaigns, false promises of sorely-needed electoral, media and other reforms, and lashings of barefaced lies.

And in the process he's invented the most bizarre numerological concept since Pol Pot's notorious Year Zero - '1Malaysia'.

Claimed by Najib as his personal brainchild, though persuasively alleged by some to have been adopted and adapted from sources including Israel and Singapore, this started life as a slogan: '1Malaysia. People first. Performance now'.

It was a total pack of lies, of course, produced to cover-up the very opposites of what it claimed. That, far from unifying Malaysia's races and religions, Umno/BN survives by keeping them as much at odds with each other as possible. That it puts its own interests first and those of the people last, and has no intention of performing as a proper government, now or any time in the future.

But since its incarnation as part of a slogan, however misbegotten and mendacious as it might have been, '1Malaysia' seems to have morphed, Frankenstein-style, into a monster with a maniacal life of its own.

NONE In other words, Najib seems to have been so convinced and confused by his own deceit that he's succumbed to outright delusion. Creating a fantasy world or parallel universe, every facet of which he fancies he can dominate with his inane, insane '1Malaysia' brand.

Nothing, it appears, can make him see sense. The abject failure of his '1Malaysia' email project certainly didn't give him pause. And he's simply been shrugging off allegations of cronyism, false labelling and sub-standard merchandise that have been plaguing his Kedai Rakyat 1Malaysia grocery-store enterprise.

And now, nothing daunted, he's apparently hell-bent on proceeding with even more '1Malaysia' initiatives, including an investment scheme whose ridiculously high promised returns makes it look for all the world like a Ponzi scam.

It might still be the Year of the Rabbit for a few more days yet, but what kind of bunny devotes his time and attention to inventing his own personal, alternative brand and starting bogus small businesses when he's supposed to be running the country?

Or in Najib's disordered mind is this actually the Year of the Cow, and the Mad Cow at that, as the National Feedlot Corporation scandal continues to reveal his promises to end official corruption as just his customary load of bull?

Speaking of which, in the past few days he's even tried selling his shop-soiled '1Malaysia' bill of goods to 1,000 delegates as a Global Movement of the Moderates conference as a guide to the pursuit of "moderation in democracy, rule of law, education, human dignity and social justice".

Maybe the forthcoming Lunar New Year will snap Najib out of his '1Malaysia' mania. But better yet I hope it provokes him into finally calling a general election.

Because I have an auspicious feeling that, just as the sign of the rabbit has spelt doom for so many robber regimes in the Arab world, the year of the brave and noble Dragon could finally see the end of the dragging-down of Malaysia by the dregs and drones of Umno/BN.