

**Bomb threats being wasted on the young**  
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**Keruah Usit**

The three small bombs that went off in the carpark of the Jalan Duta court complex in Kuala Lumpur on Jan 9 were obviously planned in advance.

Since no one claimed credit, the bombers' motives remain as opaque as the plumes of smoke they created. However, the most credible explanation is old-fashioned terrorism.

The blasts were clearly meant as a warning: an attempt to drown out the increasing clamour of dissent among ordinary Malaysians, and to discourage us from participating in the growing number of public demonstrations.

Last July 9, the multi-ethnic Bersih 2.0 demonstrators reminded us that every government must eventually change, a socio-political memento mori.

NONEThis realisation has sown terror among Malaysia's elite political and corporate cabal, and it appears their supporters have now returned the favour, attempting to visit terror on dissenting demonstrators.

In essence, the bombs resemble an extreme, nihilistic version of the benign fatherly advice that comes spasmodically from the mouths of our figures of authority.

The message is simple: Stay away from public protest assemblies, or else.

Explosions, then silence

There has been a spooky silence on the bomb attacks among the usual publicity seekers, including Premier Najib Razak, his deputy Muhyiddin Yassin, Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein and Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin.

But you can almost imagine them frowning knowingly, wearing an "I-told-you-so" expression, and perhaps wagging a finger.

"All Malaysians must condemn the bomb blasts at (the) Jalan Duta complex," MCA secretary general Kong Cho Ha intoned solemnly on his party's website.

But not all Malaysians must obey the MCA's call to condemn the bombings, as Umno's top brass have obviously proven.

Kong tried to invent a link between the blasts and the peaceful Bersih 2.0 rally, describing both as "examples that Malaysia's political culture is descending into one of hatred from rationale (sic)".

The only alternative to violent unrest, according to his reasoning, is to support the status quo, an argument Syrian President Bashar al-Assad would be proud to call his own.

In a similar vein, NST columnist Kalimullah Hassan, an Umno acolyte, has argued that the May 13, 1969, racial violence was "sparked off" by street demonstrations.

He could never allow himself to "speak truth to power", as Edward Said once urged, and state publicly what Malaysians now know - that the carnage was politically engineered and orchestrated.

The May 13 incident was "a coup d'état by Malay state capitalists", according to Suaram director Dr Kua

Kia Soong.

The ethnic killings, far from being senseless, were carefully instigated.

They allowed crony capitalists to dominate Malaysia, and to build up a corrupt infrastructure that has made the Lehman Brothers look like philanthropists in comparison.

Kalimullah had also insisted that several bombs set off in Kota Kinabalu and Tawau in Sabah in 1986, killing five, had "started from street demonstrations in Karamunsing".

His curious version of history fails to mention that the protests had been organised by Umno, in order to unseat a newly-elected Parti Bersatu Sabah state government.

Umno was the clear beneficiary of the anti-PBS protests and of the bomb blasts.

Bombs used to support 'will to power'

Bomb attacks have not played a major role in our political scene since the heyday of the communist insurgency, half a century ago.

Historical exceptions that may shed some light on the Jalan Duta bombs include the assassination by C4 of Altantuya Shaariibuu in 2006 and the Sabah bombings in 1986.

These three bombings all share a pattern. They followed political setbacks suffered by the ruling class. They also required a significant degree of technical know-how.

The most logical source of this expertise would be from within the security apparatus, acting in support of those in power.

Indiscriminate bombings are an expression of political discontent among disenfranchised minorities in neighbouring Indonesia, Mindanao and Pattani.

But in contrast, the Jalan Duta, Altantuya and Sabah bombs were neither acts of vandalism nor rebellion.

The explosions were calculated and cynical political displays. They were statements of power.

The Sabah and Jalan Duta blasts were designed to put us, ordinary Malaysians, firmly in our place, to threaten us, and to make it clear that "might is right".

NONE Ordinary people have been trying to make their voices heard, through demonstrations; these bombs were a kind of counter-demonstration.

Even so, these fascist attacks cannot possibly curb Malaysians' demands for political change.

The spirit of protest by the Malaysian young, suffocated and dormant for three decades, has found some cracks in the barren ground of the academic establishment, and has started branching up towards the light.

The bomb threats are likely to succeed only in provoking even more anger and dissent among students and other young Malaysians.

This is a worrying development for the entrenched Umno hierarchy.

Umno leaders are well aware that the youthful uprisings in the Arab Spring ousted some of the most tenacious of the wintry despots in the Middle East, despite horrific brutality inflicted on ordinary citizens.

The rulers of Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen could not silence their populations, even with sustained, state-sponsored mayhem.

The Malaysian police must play a role as an independent, professional institution, to punish the Jalan Duta bombers for a terrorist attack that injured five people. But the police have fumbled in their response.

NONETheir only notable feats have been to offer a reward for information, a mark of cluelessness, and to gently chide Utusan Malaysia for its near-hysterical speculation on the identity of the bombers.

It would be easier to dampen speculation, of course, if the police pulled out all stops and solved the crime swiftly.

But the historical precedents of Altantuya Shaariibuu's execution, and the unsolved 1986 murders of ordinary people in Sabah are not encouraging.

The odds are against the police pinning down the political instigators behind the Jalan Duta bombs, although a scapegoat or two may eventually be fed to the mainstream media news hounds.

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