

Time we cut Umno-bilical cord
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Very few people are aware of the insidious cradle to grave policy operated by Umno. The party's strategies are highly successful and we must give them credit for this.

Perhaps, there would be less dissent if Umno leaders and their advisers spent half as much time improving the lives of Malaysians rather than increasing the coffers of Umno/BN politicians.

Let us imagine a day in the life of an ordinary Malaysian.

In the olden days, we would have been awakened by the cock crowing in the morning. Today, most of us, including the cock, will be woken up by the readings of the Quran in the early dawn.

When the Penang Islamic Affairs Department instructed all mosques and surau to ban loudspeakers at dawn in the state, the National Fatwa Council chairman Abdul Shukor Husin criticised the directive as it might affect the "unity of Muslims" in the country.

Somehow, Abdul Shukor appeared to ignore the hadith by Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, where the prophet said: "Listen ye who worship God, cause not disturbance to others. Do not raise your voice in reciting prayers, above that of the others."

Parents will prepare to ferry their children to school. In some lucky households, children take the 'bas sekolah' and in more affluent households, children may be picked up by mini-van operators, whose services are not cheap.

Someone has to pick up the tab for the money to procure the permit, to enable individuals to operate these private mini-van services.

A quick breakfast of toast and jam is all some children eat before school. Even Malaysian kitchens are not free of racism. Gardenia bread is owned by Syed Mokhtar Al-Bukhary's Tradewind Group.

Lately, consumers have been supporting Gardenia's rival brand Massimo, which is produced by Federal Flour Mills (FFM) controlled by Robert Kuok.

There were allegations that Gardenia had been instructed by Padiberas Nasional Bhd (Bernas) to stop buying flour from FFM, for allegedly racist reasons.

Malaysian parents have little choice when it comes to schools for their children. They envy those who send their children to international schools or schools abroad. They are increasingly concerned about lack of scholarships and universities which cater for specific races.

Where, they ask, is the integration of the young, in society?

Little investment in public transport

One businesswoman has lost count of the number of times she has bumped into ministers or their spouses making trips abroad to send/visit/pick up their children studying at schools in Europe, Australia or America.

The majority of us have to fight for places in a good school, and failing that, cram three jobs at a time to scrape money for the services of a tuition teacher.

Children have little time for sports or creative pursuits, and some unscrupulous teachers take advantage by saving their best efforts for their tuition classes.

If a child has to perform his national service, there are allegations that the uniforms are provided by a company associated with a high-ranking politician's wife.

When former prime minister Mahathir Mohamed launched Proton, he had only his and Umno/BN's future in mind. He dumped public money into Proton and into toll paying roads. There was little investment in public transport.

Are we really proud of the expensive national car; the overseas version is cheaper and has more safety features? Our roads are clogged because we lack a decent public transport system.

Malaysian roads are paved with gold meant for Umno/BN cronies. The majority of the Malays will head for their offices in the civil service, the rest of the population work in the private sector.

How long can this system of 'lives in parallel' be sustained before it breaks?

The family which decides to go on vacation may fly with MAS, which is popular with many foreigners and locals, but this national carrier has been stripped of its pride; by none other than Umno.

At the end of the month, the head of the household pays his mounting utility bills and perhaps he is aware that these companies are led by government cronies.

He can't even relax by watching television because he knows it is a government crony who holds the licence for his television subscription. He can't complain to his friends or family.

The hand phone he uses is on a network controlled by another government crony.

He worries over the increased numbers of foreigners milling around on the streets but he can't complain because these foreigners are also the ones who operate the food and market stalls. They all claim to have legitimate licences to operate.

When he falls ill, he believes he will get preferential treatment only if he knows someone at the government hospital. He does not find it any better in the private sector, where queues are long.

Application for subsidy rejected

With the erosion of faith in the government's medical services, it is the private system which gets overloaded.

nfc office storyHe picks at his hospital food but when he thinks of the mounting food prices for his family and the increase in petrol, he loses his appetite. The beef broth doesn't help because it reminds him of Shahrizat Abdul Jalil's National Feedlot Corporation (NFC) swindle.

He receives a call from his relative in the rural area and he thinks it's to wish that he will get well soon, but the relative was only moaning that his application for a subsidy to look after cattle had been rejected.

Like most people he prefers to be nursed at home, but whenever his maid soothes his fevered brow, he is reminded of the various fees, the trips to immigration or the government approved companies, simply to secure her services. So, his illness worsens.

He knows he has to get better because his son will be getting a doctorate but not an honorary one from Curtin University, like the wife of a prominent politician.

To celebrate their son's success, his wife has announced that she has to buy a new bag for the convocation ceremony. He just hopes it's not a Birkin. So, his illness worsens, yet again.

Worst of all, he can't afford to think of dying, because he fears that his body may be snatched by the religious authorities for one reason or another.

For decades, Umno manipulated our lives because we allowed them to. Now that we live in difficult times, we Malaysians are forced to rethink and make the hard choice of regaining control of our lives. So will you?

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