

Beggars' budget
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One thing you could say for Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's Budget 2013 is that at least it accurately reflects the Umno/BN philosophy of government: beggar the nation with ever-bigger projects for members and cronies and treat the rakyat like beggars by tossing them some small change.

Small change, in fact, could well in reality be the regime's slogan, with infinitesimally small or even regressive changes to much-loathed laws against press freedom and the right to public protest misrepresented as "transformation", and the occasional dispensation of a few lousy bucks to the poor and disadvantaged to try and buy their votes on the cheap.

Then this bunch of crooks tries to dress up the whole ugly mess with belief-begging statements like Najib's lying claim as quoted by his mouthpiece 'news' agency Bernama that "the 2013 budget is not to fish for votes, but a commitment by the government to bring prosperity to the country".

He went on to make absolute nonsense of this "no-fishing" claim by explaining that the choice of the name 'Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M2.0) for the doling-out of peanuts to the peasants in the budget "was also one way of hitting at the opposition for organising Bersih 2.0".

"We call it BR1M2.0 actually to hit at the opposition for organising Bersih 2.0 which was totally not clean," he crowed, in defiance of the universally-known fact that Bersih 2.0 was a massive public call for the clean and fair elections that voters have long been begging for, and Umno/BN continues to strenuously deny them.

In other words, he was continuing to fish for votes in his typically fishy fashion even as he tried to deny it. And thus only served to remind us all that his budget was vote-hooking expedition from start to finish, complete with a vicious and lying attack on the opposition.

Unlike the opposition, he claimed, "BN has never promised the moon and stars or the galaxy. We have never painted a pretty picture based on wishful thinking."

"As a responsible government, we continue to speak the truth, even though it may be unpleasant," he continued, "we have never misled the rakyat with tall tales."

When of course the fact is that Umno/BN has never misled the rakyat with anything but tall tales, as continuously told by Najib and his partners-in-crime and re-told on their behalf by a propaganda machine comprising expensive publicly-funded public relations consultancies and the entire Umno/BN-owned and/or dominated mainstream media.

Empty assurances

He then went on to further beggar belief with the claim that "we recognise that the Barisan Nasional government is not without fault, but what differentiates us from others is that they do not have the courage to accept mistakes".

What "mistakes" or rather crimes, Najib is implying that Umno/BN has had the courage to accept is anybody's guess, what with countless nation-beggaring regime financial scandals still unadmitted and unresolved, and regime-linked killings like those of Altantuya Shaariibuu, Teoh Beng Hock and others too numerous to name still shrouded in media-assisted mystery.

But still he went on and on, even quoting ancient Greek philosopher Plato to the effect that "the measure of a man is what he does with his power", and claiming that the BN government is guided by the Quran in "striving to do good".

The opposition, on the other hand, he said without the slightest shred of evidence or credibility, is "striving to do ill", as well as "sowing the seeds of hate" and having the "whims and fancy" to accuse Umno/BN of wrongdoing.

Echoing Najib's empty assurance that the budget had not been an attempt to fish for votes, Finance Ministry secretary-general Mohd Irwan Siregar Abdullah shortly afterwards stated that the coming general election "did not figure in the discussions involved in drafting the 2013 budget".

"In the six months that we collected data for the budget, we never had the elections in mind," he lied. "It was all about the people, the people first."

If you believe that, you'll believe anything, even the proposition that the Umno/BN government is serious about addressing the clearly soaring crime rate. But of the RM600 million ostensibly budgeted for this purpose, over RM272 million is intended not to actually reduce crime, but to "improve the safety perception index".

In other words, to conceal the incidence of crime rather than to reduce it, presumably in a similar fashion in which International Trade and Industry deputy minister Mukhriz Mahathir recently attempted to allay community fears about two highly-unpopular regime-permitted projects.

"Don't worry, there is no problem that will happen," Malaysiakini quoted him as assuring Parliament on the safety of the Lynas rare earths plant in Pahang and the Rapid petroleum refinery in Pengerang, Johor, and adding "Malaysia has strict environmental guidelines that must be complied with by all".

As many commentators have since noted, however, Malaysia's "strict guidelines" have never prevented the ravaging of the environment by illegal loggers, rapacious 'developers' and scandalously polluting industrial plants.

Just as similarly "strict guidelines" against corruption, theft and murder have done little to stem the lawlessness of Umno/BN and its cronies during decade after dreary decade of regime rule.

So little restraint has the regime shown in its rape and plunder of the nation's resources and other riches, in fact, that it has beggared not only the treasury but also all public belief and trust in the police, judiciary, news media and every other civil institution into the bargain.

Which is why, when Najib finally calls the general election he is bound to hold between now and the end of next April, and starts in earnest on his customary "I help you, you help me" begging routine, there's a very good chance that the much-abused voters of Malaysia will finally tell him and his accomplices to beggar off.

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