

**Looking forward to true Merdeka**  
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Every year on Merdeka Day I'm reminded of Mahatma Gandhi's famous response to a reporter who asked him on a visit to Britain in 1931 what he thought about Western civilisation: "I think it would be a good idea."

I think genuine Merdalliance malaya perikatan 1950 210408 02eka or true political independence for Malaysia would be a very good idea too. Unfortunately for present-day Malaysians, when the British departed in 1957 they left the unfortunate populace in the custody of their proxies in the so-called 'Alliance'.

It soon revealed itself to be a very unholy alliance indeed, and has since evolved, or rather devolved, into the gang of the anti-democratic and spectacularly kleptocratic neo-colonial nasties known today as BN.

Under the guise of protecting Malay rights and Islamic values, and in the process making a total mockery of both, they've colonised Malaysia even more comprehensively than the British ever did, and arguably with even more arrogant and callous disregard for the rights of the common people.

NONEThe British, at least, introduced and practised common law. But BN, through the agency of Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his minions and successors, has perverted the law and bent the judiciary to serve its own unsavoury purposes.

Though, now that I come to think of it, BN has certainly respected one law it inherited from its British benefactors.

The Internal Security Act, originally intended as a temporary measure to help suppress the communist menace, has been faithfully retained throughout the 53 years of BN rule for the express purpose of persecuting the regime's critics and political opponents.

Then there's the fact that, while the British treated - or, if you like, mistreated - all races pretty well equally. BN practices its policy of undeclared but nonetheless obvious apartheid everywhere it can: the armed forces, the police and all the other civil services, even in universities and the allocation of scholarships.

Of course it's also undeniably true that the British, whatever their few saving graces, robbed their colony of Malaya of its wealth to amass huge fortunes for themselves and flaunt their ill-gotten gains by building splendid mansions and palaces.

But ofkhir toyo mansion 060709 course so do the robber-barons of BN; witness just two of countless examples, the istana that former Selangor menteri besar Dr Mohd Khir Toyo has splashed out on to celebrate his success in public life, and the international real-estate empire of Sarawak Chief Minister and timber tycoon extraordinaire, Abdul Taib Mahmud.

As for civil rights under the auspices of BN, these are right out of the British colonial rule-book. Protest, public assembly and press freedom are as unthinkable in BN's Malaysia as they could ever have been in British Malaya.

Heeding Kennedy

In fact it's deliciously ironical that, as Malaysians, or at least some Malaysians, celebrate Merdeka Day this year, the old colonial oppressor is seen as a haven and beacon of liberty, and thus a source of possible salvation from the repressions of BN.

As you maazlany have noticed in Malaysiakini and elsewhere, Britain's BBC is being lambasted by Malaysian opponents of the BN government for failing to air a 'Hard Talk' interview with self-exiled freedom fighter Raja Petra Kamarudin.

I have no idea whatever as to the rights and wrongs of this allegation, as it's virtually impossible to discover the truth about anything in BN's Malaysia. As surely every Malaysian must be aware by now, the so-called 'mainstream' media are devoted to concealing and/or confusing political issues, not revealing or clarifying them.

But if the BBC has indeed censored itself for fear of legal action by the Malaysian government as some have suggested, or been gagged by the UK government out of national self-interest as others have proposed, I'd be very much surprised.

Britain's press is about as free as it gets these days, though antiquated and draconian defamation laws still stifle it more than many consider desirable. And given the uncompromising line the BBC has taken with other rotten post-colonial regimes around the world, like Burma, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and all the other usual suspects, I doubt that it trembles as the prospect of possible wrath of BN.

On second thoughts, harpers bazaar klue muhkriz khairy 190310though, I must admit that UK institutions are far from perfect. Oxford University, for example, admired if not revered for centuries as a seat of civilisation and scholarship, has produced some decidedly dubious alumni over the years, including Umno Youth poster-boy Khairy Jamaluddin.

Even more notoriously, it not only graduated that blot on the world's free media, Rupert Murdoch, back in his youth, but has since accepted his tabloid-tainted cash in endowment of a School of Communications. And as if to add insult to this injury to its integrity, just a couple of weeks ago it welcomed Taib as a guest speaker at one of its faculties in London.

So all in all, I wouldn't be counting too much on the old colonial masters to rescue Malaysia from the regime they so carelessly left behind when they vacated the country five decades ago.

In any case, the NONEBritish can hardly be blamed for failing to protect Malaysians from a government that they've elected over and over again despite its long record of appalling racism, incompetence and corruption.

Even today, despite the outcries of a vocal and courageous minority, most Malaysians still seem to me pathetically apathetic about their political plight. With four million or so reportedly still unregistered to vote, millions more still tuning-in to BN's false news on radio and TV, and countless others still buying the lying newspapers.

Let's hope that, in these days following Merdeka from Britain Day 2010, a few more previously passive citizens have come to their senses and realised that Merdeka from BN might also, in the immortal words of the Mahatma, "be a good idea".

And that they will soon get up the gumption to heed the famous exhortation by the most un-Gandhi-like John F Kennedy to "ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country".

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