

Terengganu MB : 10 days a long time in politics
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R Abdullah

The Terengganu menteri besar's post remains vacant despite Idris Jusoh having been selected by the state BN to remain for a second term. It seems he has a problem with the sultan (who is also Malaysia's king by rotation) and by this unusual delay one can assume the problem is a big one. So what is the problem? MCPX

One would have imagined that any objection by the sultan (character, conduct) would have been settled days ago. So what is wrong with Idris? Well, what is 'right' with him may be 'wrong' for the sultan, and even more 'wrong' for the sultan's family and associates.

On becoming menteri besar in 2004, Idris made two monumental decisions that other MBs dared not to follow - one is the banning of further development on Terengganu's fragile islands and the other was the ban on lucrative logging concessions.

Furthermore, he ordered enforcement of existing laws in these matters, to the extent that illegal structures on the islands have been torn down, and sawmills are checked daily for illegal logging. No doubt a minority are unhappy and they may be lobbying the sultan.

Unfortunately, in this respect the sultan is exposed directly to both island development and the logging lobby via his family's links to Berjaya Corporation (his younger brother is a director) and his own family's logging concessions, these days untapped.

Before 1994, Redang Island was a beautiful, untouched, coral fringed island that had no chalets with just a small fishing community. Then came Berjaya Golf and Spa Resort, a huge project for its day. This project was facilitated by the sultan's late father, as the land was Malay reserve.

It was big project and till today still destructive. It was a star feature in the World Anti-Golf Day 1995 though the golf course's holes were reduced from 18 to nine but only after the mangrove swamps were flattened.

The holes, however, reappeared however in both Terengganu's and the federal government budgets for water supply from the mainland, a power generator, the moving of the entire (once picturesque) village, a boat jetty on the mainland that failed, that was rebuilt and failed again and so on - the cost is in the millions. No wonder then, that island developments are left 'under review' for now.

It is fair to say that Idris first term was a good and brave one (the last BN MB stayed on the job for 26 years), but he is victim to some rather useless projects by the federal government (ie Putrajaya) namely the Monsoon Cup, the Islamic Civilisation Theme Park, a huge sports complex (we are past a billion ringgit by now) the sultan's horse-racing complex built for a 'once a year' race. There are more.

So why the delay in swearing-in the Terengganu MB?. The sultan has got appointed advisors, but he is not listening to them. So who does he listen to? Who are they? Ten days is a long time.

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