

BN Inc on the brink
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The way things are shaping up right now, we won't have to wait for Anwar Ibrahim's September deadline to see Barisan Nasional (BN) sink.
MCPX

Despite Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's desperate attempts to demonstrate that his premiership is in the pink, everything his government does - or doesn't do - these days seems to cause an almighty stink.

Take the case of the disappearing indelible ink. First the opposition was outraged by the pre-election decision not to use this precious fluid, specially imported from India at considerable expense, on the dubious grounds that certain parties had sourced their own supply for the purpose of throwing the polls into disarray.

abdul rashid ec chairman and indelible ink for election 010607At the time this appeared to be the decision of the BN-biased Electoral Commission. But now EC chairperson Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman, in a shock demonstration of indignant independence, has claimed that the ink-free vote was ordered by the cabinet and that he was "told to take the whole responsibility".

The prime minister immediately denied Abdul Rashid's claim, saying: "It was only a suggestion we made to the EC chair(person). It was up to him to think it over and agree or to proceed with the original decision to use the ink."

Since then the whole issue has become impossibly murky, with different parties making confusing claims and counter-claims as to the time-frame of the decision to axe the ink, and who made it and why.

I can't make head or tail of it myself, and frankly can't be bothered trying, but Haris Ibrahim makes a brave attempt at unraveling the situation in his blog-post, 'Indelible ink: can we have the bloody truth, please?'

lieu chin tongBut whoever's telling the truth - if indeed anyone - Liew Chin Tong, the steering committee member of the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih), is clearly justified in his statement reported in TheSun.

He said: "The EC's mission was to ensure a clean, fair and free election and it is very wrong (of) them to have listened to the cabinet. The EC is an independent body mandated by the constitution and should be independent of any Executive influence."

Second-guessing Mahathir

The Executive may have decided in its wisdom not to use the ink, but it's certainly been extremely busy in employing the clink.

It has refused to release the Hindraf 5, still incarcerated under the ISA on baseless charges, and is also lumbering blogger Raja Petra Kamarudin and writer Syed Akbar Ali and lodging

numerous police reports against Karpal Singh for sedition.

Now, BN has gone totally overboard in the clink department, accusing the inky wretches who run of some of its very own dinky newspapers of breaching the Official Secrets Act - an offence that on conviction carries a mandatory jail sentence - by printing leaked information from the report of the royal commission of inquiry into the VK Lingam tape.

vk lingam scandal mahathir eusoff chin adnan fairuz vincent lingam And as everybody well knows, the report in question has recommended that the attorney-general institutes immediate investigation of Lingam, former chief justices Ahmed Sheikh Abdul Halim and Eusoff Chin, former minister Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor, crony-tycoon Vincent Tan and former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad for offences under laws including the Sedition Act, Official Secrets Act, Penal Code, Prevention of Corruption Act and the Legal Profession Act.

Most commentators have taken this recommendation with the proverbial grain of salt, as in Malaysia astonishingly few, if any, rich and powerful suspects are ever charged for crimes of which they're suspected.

Witness the facts, for example, that former ministers S Samy Velu and Rafidah Aziz have never faced court on allegations of corruption, while Najib Abdul Razak remains defence minister and deputy prime minister despite the rumours of scandal that perennially surround him.

But Mahathir wasn't about to settle for Najib-style denial or take this attack on him lying down. In fact he seized this opportunity to scorn the spectre of the clink and threatened to turn rat fink, declaring, "I want them to charge me in court. Only then will I have the opportunity to expose more conflicts faced by the judges, including those who have implicated me."

But when that message failed to make Abdullah blink, he must have had a re-think. What's he hoping to achieve with this latest grand-standing gesture? Considering his advanced age, it's anybody's guess.

A triumphal return to power by enlisting grassroots Malays as his foot-soldiers in the same way that his old friend and fellow geriatric Robert Mugabe has used his "war veterans" to prop up his contemptible Zanu-PF regime?

pillow pmo abduallah 040108 08 The punishment of Abdullah, his hand-picked successor, for failing to stick to the Dr M agenda and sleepily leading BN to a humiliating near loss in the 2008 general election?

A last, desperate effort to stave-off the unthinkable, his arch-enemy Anwar's march to the premiership at the head of Pakitan Rakyat?

A panic-stricken attempt to preserve the system of money politics, corruption, cronyism and shattered civil institutions that he spent 22 years of his life carefully crafting?

Another bid for the limelight, whatever the cost to the nation and his own dubious and increasingly despised legacy?

Or just another cunning move to keep himself out of the courts, where, with most poetic of justice, some of the bent law officers or judges he had a hand in appointing might just send him to jail?

His motives could be any, a mixture of many, or even all of these. Or any number of others I've overlooked or failed to imagine. But I personally don't believe that Mahathir's moves have much to do with reality any more.

For all my hypothesising about ink, fear of the clink and dismay at the sinking fortunes of BN Inc, my own opinion, for what it's worth, is that Dr M should go see a good shrink.

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