

Merdeka, Murdeka, Moo-deka
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OK, OK, I surrender. Today, as I celebrate my personal liberation from the oppressive academic situation that kept me from writing a column last week, I find myself totally out-punned on this week's top topic of Merdeka.

It seems as if every article, blog and comment I see lately presents a powerful, funny and/or punny case for choosing not to celebrate Malaysia's independence from Britain in favour of 52 years of subjection to Barisan Nasional.

Murdeka, of course, is one of the most commonly-cited concepts, given BN's reluctance to properly investigate a string of notoriously suspicious cases like the shooting and C4 disposal of the Mongolian 'model' Altantuya Shaariibuu, the persistent killing of 'suspects' in 'shoot-outs' with the police, the hordes of mysterious deaths in police custody and the recent alleged suicide of Teoh Beng Hock in the headquarters of the Malaysian Anti Corruption Commission.

But murder, be it condoned, covered-up or even encouraged by the BN government and its agencies, isn't confined to actual homicide. It's aided and abetted by BN's accomplices in the criminally compliant judiciary and those cold-blooded assassins of the truth, the 'journalists' of the mainstream media.

Besides Murdeka, another popular pun, I've noticed, is Moodeka, or, as alternatively rendered, Moo-deka, in reference to the insulting pre-Merdeka demonstration against the building of a Hindu temple in Shah Alam, featuring the disembodied head of a cow.

As alarming as this sacriligious act was to good Muslims as well as non-Muslims, even more atrocious, I thought, was the response to it by Selangor police chief Khalid Abu Bakar and Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein.

The police farce

The former took no action, claiming that his police were too busy or otherwise occupied to intervene, thereby raising outraged questions as to how hundreds of police can be found to block roads and arrest peaceful demonstrators whenever opposition supporters rally against the BN government.

And Hishammuddin, in his typical bully-boy fashion, attempted to both justify the lack of official action against the clearly-identified culprits and to refute accusations that the police were colluding with Umno over the issue, by declaring that such criticism was aimed at "discrediting the police force".

The police farce, that is, as some commentators rightly remarked. And just as farcical, given his government's shameless attempts to sow racial and religious discord whenever it suits its nefarious purposes, was Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's Merdeka-Day speech.

Invoking his trademark 'bridge' metaphor, which as I've mentioned before only serves to remind us all of Mahathir's notorious 'crooked bridge' and the new bridge with which BN vainly tried to bribe voters in the Manek Urai by-election, he hyped his hypocritical 1Malaysia slogan as hard as ever.

Urging Malaysians to "restore the bridge" which was painstakingly built between them by the nation's forefathers, but has now been shaken by people in "certain quarters" to serve "their own warped agenda", he called on the people to build upon what the country has achieved "by cultivating the principles we have long nurtured".

"Long nurtured"? Long neutered, more likely, through a lengthy history of utterly unprincipled actions, from the fomenting of race riots on May 13, 1969 by Najib's father, Tun Razak, in his bid to replace Tunku Abdul Rahman as Prime Minister, through Mahathir's sacking of the Lord Chief Justice, 'Ops Lalang' and the show trials of Anwar Ibrahim, plus the progressive politicising of the police and civil service and the employment of the New Economic Policy to rip-off the nation and enrich the so-called Umnoputeras.

Much as I'm tempted to pick Najib's self-serving oration to pieces line by lying line, however, I really can't be bothered. In any case, this specious speech has been comprehensively eclipsed by two magnificent pieces I've seen in *Malaysiakini*: 'Merdeka 2009: A nation divided' by Charles Santiago, and 'Dream of a sincere Merdeka' by Azly Rahman.

Hollow and desperate

Both of these articles are worth not only reading and re-reading, but keeping for future reference.

I'd hate to spoil them for you by quoting too extensively, but can't resist repeating part of Santiago's take on the current prime minister:

"Najib, however, still fakes a penchant for democracy, diplomacy and justice while stifling political freedom for fear of losing his ability to monopolise power in the country...the continued suppression and violation of aborigines' rights, control of the media, attempts to silence and clamp down on alternative media and bloggers, prevalent use of preventive laws to keep a lid on dissent and rampant corruption clearly shows how little Najib cares about lending substance to his new campaign, 1Malaysia."

I wish I'd said that, just as I wish I'd said much of what Azly Rahman writes: 'We no longer have virtuous leaders in our political system. We have many who are corrupt to the bone, interested only in plundering the national wealth in order to survive the next general election. And we continue to breed new leaders who think that politics is about buying votes and selling the nation.'

So much for Najib's fraudulent 1Malaysia Merdeka-Day message. A message, that, however much it's massaged by Malaysia's malevolent mainstream media, is sounding more hollow and desperate every time Barisan Nasional suffers defeat in yet another by-election. Seven out of eight so far since the previous general election.

And this week's devastation of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party after 60 years of virtually unbroken domination must be sending an additional shudder through BN ranks.

But having said all that, I hope and trust that BN never changes. Because the more Murdekas, Moodekas and outright Madekas that this incompetent and criminal neo-colonial coalition oversees, the closer Malaysians get to some day celebrating a genuine Merdeka from its deadly domination.

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