

Gross Mismanagement, Glaring Corruption
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This is a rich country. But the reality of the situation doesn't reflect this. The woes of the poor, the hopelessness of the marginalised, the helplessness of the homeless, the misery of the hard-core poor – all this could have been solved if we have had people of integrity and responsible leaders administering this country.

If only politicians had come into the picture with a clear vision and a passionate mission to serve the nation and make life meaningful for the vast majority who are poor, things would have been different.

If after more than 50 years of absolute power and unbroken rule by the same political party, we continue to suffer the indignities of poverty, the miseries of the marginalised, the deprivation of the urban settlers, then we must honestly ask if the Barisan Nasional deserves to remain in power. Is the BN capable of serving the interests of the deserving?

Without a second thought, let me say that they have forfeited their right to remain in power. The fate of this nation and the welfare of the people cannot be trusted in their hands. They have proven to be a self-serving, uncaring, indifferent, greedy lot. They have plundered the country and squandered our wealth.

This is not a mere allegation. It is a fact confirmed by the Auditor-General year in year out. Some of the stark discrepancies pointed out in the AG's report take the breath out of you. It is simply unimaginable that gross mismanagement, glaring corruption, staggering waste can take place year after year without heads rolling and without anyone being held accountable for this blatant mismanagement of our finances under the BN governance.

How would you feel as a tax payer if someone tells you that our defence ministry pays RM7.55 bn for some armoured vehicles that are actually worth one quarter of the price?

How would you feel when a car jack normally sold for around RM50 was purchased for RM5700, when a digital camera that cost RM2990 was bought for RM8254, when a set of technical pens with a market price of RM160 was bought for RM1146?

Why would the Malaysian Marine Parks Department spend a whopping RM56350 for a pair of night vision Marine binoculars, 29 times more than its market value of RM1940; and why would it pay the same amount or 1893 per cent more for another pair of night vision Bushnell binoculars when the actual price was RM2827?

How can you justify paying RM170 per kg of sugar when the actual price was only RM1.70? A sum of RM25500 was paid for 150 kg of sugar!

How would you feel when purchases are made with inflated prices running into billions?

How would you feel when the cattle-rearing project under the National Feedlot Corporation instead of serving the national interest was used as a tool to serve private greed?

How would you feel when pensioners both alive and dead were overpaid some RM4.5m?

How would you feel when disreputable and irresponsible contractors with shoddy track record were awarded contracts worth millions of ringgit and had their contracts even extended when their services were atrocious?

The Prime Minister's Department has a staff of 43554 employees with a budget of RM4bn. Why does he need an army of employees with such a huge budget?

The message from these examples is simple: Don't trust the BN with your money!

It means the time has come to get rid of the BN. The time is here for change. This is our last chance and last hope. We must not squander this opportunity.

A change of government would mean prudent spending, better governance, an end to repressive laws, more democratic space and policies that will benefit the vast majority of the deserving.

Let's go for change!

The above was an address given by P RAMAKRISHNAN at Aliran's Annual General Meeting held on 20 November 2011. It was his final address as President of Aliran before stepping down. Rama remains on the Aliran executive committee.

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