

Prosperity for All

For a more holistic public-private sector partnership, perhaps non-Bumiputera beneficiaries of the NEP should channel their resources to local concerns rather than taking their money out.

By Rizal Ishak

THE 'Other Thots' articles make interesting reading. They are insightful, most times enlightening and sufficiently engaging.

Malaysia holds too much promise and prospects for it to constantly be canvassed with 'overspin' by wannabe power brokers. Manufacturing content with the intent to manufacture consent, if overdone, does more harm than good even if one claims to be an extension of the incumbent powers.

We're mature readers. We can sieve, discern and make fairly intelligent conclusions about underlying realities or the deciphered truth. We need decisive political and government leaders.

Institutional integrity can only exist if the men and women leading them are true to themselves. Place as much trust in the people and constituencies as we have entrusted our leaders to formulate and implement socially empowering policies.

The New Economic Policy or any other policy that combines growth with equitable distribution can be used to the nation's advantage, especially to enable the marginalised groups, Bumiputeras and others to catch up and regain lost ground.

The economic minority, who are mostly Malays and other Bumiputeras, are marginalised in business and after a bout of Malay bashing for being '*tongkat* dependent', we need a perception boost amongst the nation's economic agents.

We have had several Malay-led successes. One such example is Felda, the world's largest land scheme. It is in the position to create enormous public and private wealth along with other government-linked companies (GLCs) under the Khazanah group.

But to be where it is today required strong politically empowered leadership (with limited political intervention) and not mere accounting prudence or the recent ministerial flash of brilliance to list Felda on Bursa Malaysia. The Amanah Saham Bumiputera format or

approach may be a better option for Felda.

Professional accountants with zero or limited business building and crisis management experience are unlikely to be able to restore and create enterprise value even if positioned as CEOs of such companies. All the talk of housekeeping, VSS, reorganising, rightsizing, etc, for more than a year reflects the pace, seriousness and urgency of massive value creation for stakeholders.

AirAsia Bhd, led by a Virgin Branson fan, has gone from zero to hero or RM4 billion in market capitalisation in

four years, while the GLCs have yet to make one foreign acquisition of, in consulting lingo, a 'star performer' that befits the image that they have been painting of themselves lately.

With all the boasting of the national service they are doing — hence the extended hours that they keep and the generous compensation packages that they receive—the GLC 'dream teams' should have not only created massive shareholder value by now but also boosted the entire 'food' and economic value chain (downstream and upstream) that would benefit Bumiputera SMEs and support services that 'feed' off such lucrative opportunities.

But sadly, we hear that the Malaysian consortium which will own the RM 8 billion IWPP (with a desalination plant) in the Middle East will be built by foreign contractors and not Malaysian companies. Surely, our capable negotiators could have insisted on greater and deeper participation in such a lucrative concession.

In the meantime, the traditional contractors in the non-Bumiputera sectors who had benefited from billions of ringgit of NEP contracts, anything from housing to nucleus hospitals, schools, IPPs, satellite communications and other forms of 'approved permits (APs)' from the government are quietly investing abroad using their multi-billion ringgit reserves.

To create lasting economic and commercial value, we need the highest calibre, rough and ready and proven talent. It is not sufficient to rely upon only the cleverest and the brightest but more importantly to lead them.

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