What If Anwar Returns?
No one can be happy in jail, surely.

Surely not Anwar Ibrahim? Not after three years of incarceration, not while suffering a bad back and injured neck, and burdened with the knowledge that several Keadilan leaders are detained under ISA without even the benefit of a trial?

Yet, even from prison, Anwar would know that his two convictions and sentence to a total of 15 years’ imprisonment have not set aside public memories of the Anwar affair or tarnished his reputation in the eyes of a lot of people.

Besides, it’s UMNO that’s been having a nightmare. Especially for many Malays the party has run out of steam and has no ideas for progressing ‘beyond Anwar’. If anything, the Mahathir-Daim split has brought back the ghost of UMNO’s unending factionalism. Many wonder who will soon part ways with whom.

Anwar would be aware, too, that Barisan Alternatif has still to plot a clear way forward. DAP and PAS are caught in an unproductive polemic over the ‘Islamic state’. If they want to deepen their cooperation, and enrich the critical Muslim-non-Muslim dialogue begun in 1998-99, both must desist from trying to make political capital out of ‘ideological purity’ that bears little relationship to current social and political realities.

Their defeat in Likas, Sabah, after their last successful electoral outing in Lunas, Kedah, should caution the Keadilan leaders that they have to do a lot more ground work before even thinking of ‘spreading wings’ to Sabah, the way UMNO did some years back. Above all, Keadilan needs to make progress in its proposed merger with PRM which still looks like a good way to create political synergy to overcome their individual weaknesses.

To the exent that Malaysian politics remains at an impasse after 36 months of some of the most tumultuous events in our history, were you Anwar, would you not be hopeful that quite possibly the future of Malaysian politics belonged to you?

I’m sure a lot of Malaysians think about the possibility of Anwar’s return although there’s no public discussion of the matter.
Happy Malaysia Day!  
Happy Merdeka Day! Happy Human Rights Day!

These days, Malaysians understand Merdeka to mean independence, democracy, freedom and social justice for all citizens. Hence we celebrate it with all fellow Malaysians without regard for their ethnicity, religion or creed.

Whether we like it or not, every Merdeka will also bring with it a memory of Anwar Ibrahim’s sacking just two days after 31 August 1998 and his eventual incarceration. It is now three years since that episode unleashed a firm movement for justice, democracy, and reform. In this month’s lead story, Khoo Boo Teik reflects on Anwar’s past and what it may mean for our future.

We also carry a feature on the situation in Aceh, whose husband Saari Sungib languishes in the Kamunting Detention Centre. What irony to celebrate Merdeka Day (and Malaysia’s inaugural Human Rights Day on Sept 9) behind bars, without trial.

An important feature in this issue is the affidavit filed by Hishamuddin Rais against his detention without trial in which he recounts his interrogation, indeed, torture by the authorities. The affidavit is revealing, sometimes chilling.

The backpage story by Philip James previews the upcoming Sarawak state election. No doubt the BN will win. But there might be surprises in the Malay-majority constituencies. Watch out for the popular vote as well.

We also carry a feature on the situation in Aceh, where people marginalised by Jakarta are now struggling for their freedom. It is a complex issue threatening to blow up in Megawati’s face.

Happy Merdeka Day! Happy Human Rights Day! Happy Malaysia Day!
Among them are people who would be hesitant to entrust their future to a man who spent 16 years in the company of the men and women who unceremoniously threw him out of UMNO in September 1998.

There are also people who want to ‘think beyond personalities’, sometimes to the extent of ridiculing Keadilan for being a one-issue party, the issue being Anwar’s freedom.

Most of all, there are many people who wonder if a freed Anwar will re-enter UMNO, forsake his present allies, and re-establish ‘Malay unity’ to restore the legitimacy that Mahathir and UMNO have lost.

No one should dismiss such opinions out of hand.

At this impasse, however, might not the crux of the matter lie elsewhere? Might not the real question be: if Anwar is able to return to the political scene not too long from now, and wants to transform it, can we expect him to go ‘beyond the old Anwar’?

### Past And Future

Since we can’t foretell the future, maybe we can start by looking for clues from Anwar’s past.

In a 30-year career of activism and politics, Anwar may be said to have gone through four phases.

During the first phase of the late 1960s, he was a student at the University of Malaya. There he led the Persatuan Bahasa Melayu and Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar-pelajar Islam. His Persatuan Bahasa Melayu image and activities drew him to some politicians, like Mahathir, who were admired by some as ‘Malay nationalists’ and feared by others as ‘Malay ultras’.

The second phase came in the 1970s when Anwar founded Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) and built it into a powerful vehicle of an Islamic resurgence. It was all the more powerful for being the voice of a new generation of Malay-Muslim youth.

The third and longest phase found Anwar in UMNO and government. Between 1982 and 1998, Anwar rose from being co-opted into the early Mahathir regime to being ‘anointed’ as Mahathir’s successor. He rose with a dizzying rapidity that alarmed many of his party rivals.

The present and potentially decisive phase is the post-September 1998 phase when Anwar reinvented himself as the icon of Reformasi.

What can this admittedly bare bit of a personal history of activist involvement and political advancement tell us about Anwar?

### Anti-Establishment

One thing is immediately striking. In three out of his four ‘phases’, Anwar was an anti-establishment figure. To put things simply, he was anti-Tunku after 1969, anti-Barisan Nasional in the 1970s, and has been anti-UMNO since 1998.

Only during that long UMNO phase was he a leading figure of the establishment.

His ideological commitments in those anti-establishment phases seem varied enough when taken separately.

Anwar’s Malay nationalism in the 1960s was associated with the promotion of the national language and took in New Economic Policy type issues, too. It is well known that he was a campus ally of Mahathir who let Anwar read drafts of what was published as The Malay Dilemma.

In the 1970s, Anwar’s Islamic
commitments were initially expressed via various Yayasan Anda activities in aid of Malay-Muslim students, and the nascent campus dakwah movement (both at home and abroad). Later Islam became the fount from which Anwar drew his moral criticisms of government policies and their outcomes.

Anwar’s stand on poverty, economic inequality and social dislocation under NEP led him to Baling to support the 1974 demonstrations, and thereafter to Kamunting for a stretch of detention under ISA. In the final years of Anwar’s Islamic phase (before he joined UMNO), ABIM led a coalition of ‘societies’ – what would be better known as NGOs today – in a big campaign against the Societies Act.

Between 2 September 1998, when he was sacked, and 20 September, when he was arrested, Anwar inspired a movement for democracy, reforms and social justice. In prison since, he’s been unable to provide strategic leadership to the multiethnic movement that resulted in BA’s formation. But the image of his raised fist and battered face and swollen eye was evoked by every defiant chant of Re-for-ma-si!

**Common Threads**

Anwar’s ideological commitments of his anti-establishment phases have never been fully spelt out, which is one reason he was often thought to be malleable, if not opportunistic. Yet, viewed collectively, those commitments contained several notable threads.

One thread was drawn from ‘ethnic strands’ of the different phases. It began with the campus Malay nationalism. It was modified by ABIM’s brand of ‘non-ethnic’ civil activism. It was grafted onto reformasi’s to supply an experiment in multiethnic politics. This first thread captures Anwar’s shift, albeit a gradual shift, to a position on ethnic relations that in the 1990s was most liberally called multiculturalism.

A second thread grew from ABIM’s critiques of economic inequalities, social injustice and the restrictions imposed on civil liberties. Over time, they expanded from the defence of the Baling farmers to the national campaign against the Societies Act. After Anwar’s fall, those critiques were dusted from the shelves of his UMNO days and meshed with BA’s opposition to ‘cronyism, corruption and nepotism’.

There is an important third thread. It was not formed by what Anwar stood for, as with whom he most comfortably stood, and who, in his moments of tribulation, would stand most firmly by him – students, youth and civil society. Students and youth featured prominently in all phases of Anwar’s anti-establishment activism, and civil society in his Islamic and reformasi phases.

After September 1998, this third thread allowed Anwar to reinvent himself as an activist and establish an old affinity with groups and people who, in social and political terms, make up floating, transient and marginalized constituencies.

Spin these three threads together and the result is likely to be a fabric with cultural motifs, the concerns of civil society and aspirations for moral renewal. This is precisely the intellectual fabric of *The Asian Renaissance*, the book that Anwar wrote at the peak of his establishment phase.

It is to this phase that we must now turn.

**The UMNO Phase**

Almost from start to finish, Anwar’s UMNO phase was marked by contradiction.

Joining UMNO, Anwar split ABIM. Taking part of ABIM along with him, he helped to split UMNO.

For him, Islam had nourished a moral critique of society under capitalism. Now he fell in with Mahathir for whom Islam meant a work ethic to serve Malaysian capitalism.

Anwar left civil society to enter the state. But, ‘call me Saudara’, he liked to speak as if the state should behave like a caring civil society.

But reasons of state leave no room for idealism and personal promises. Anwar justified his co-optation as a mission to ‘change things from inside’. By and by, nothing – not SA, ISA or OSA – could be changed ‘from inside’.

Nothing changed except perhaps his mission was personalized as so often happened when a rising star reached for the sky. So, for 16 years, Anwar acculturated himself to party politics that grew murkier by the year.

From the 1980s, UMNO’s infighting whirled out of control. In a milieu where considerations of state power, party influence and corpo-
rate wealth determined where one stood, teams were assembled only to be re-assembled. To survive, one recognized ‘friends’ to the degree that they were the ‘enemies of enemies’. By the time he became UMNO’s deputy president in 1993, Anwar had been a veteran of such politics.

_Ambiguities And Apologies_

Where, in this kind of a heartless world, does one find a haven for one’s soul?

Speaking politically, not spiritually, Anwar might have thought that he could chart a haven by negotiating between unstoppable political imperatives and unattainable personal impulses.

I mean, for example, that Anwar couldn’t alter the course of Mahathir’s programme of late industrialisation but he would try to put a benign face to it. He couldn’t prevent all kinds of injustices but he wanted to offer sympathy to their victims. He couldn’t control the rapacity of the corporate bosses but he made to spare a thought for the rest of us.

Sceptics call this hypocrisy. A neutral way of looking at it is to regard it as the politics of an uneasy conscience, practised by those who are ‘part of the system’ but believe they haven’t ‘sold out’.

But even if one wanted to, one couldn’t play the political game at the apex, and still switch off the ostentation and insincerity of Kayyel on demand and balik kampung to simplicity and warmth!

In good times, one sounded like a wimp. In tense situations, one was called a non-team player. When the chips are down, one becomes a turncoat. _Mahu makan taukeh ke?,_ they begin to ask in UMNO parlance.

Anwar had watched (and maybe helped to make) Musa Hitam fail in this game. The problem was, Anwar, like Musa, probably never quite shared Mahathir’s vision of building Malay capitalism – at least not with the same resolve and purpose.

Mahathir apologized to no one for devoting himself to the hard-nosed preoccupations of the corporate world, money market and global economy. He changed from being a ‘man of the people’ to being the patron of the movers and shakers of our domestic world. For him, people were moved by boundless ambition, ceaseless competition, and actual achievement – or destined for failure.

So to speak, Anwar seemed to apologize on Mahathir’s behalf by dabbling in a vague moral economy, a sort of ‘Anwar’s agenda’.

_Awar’s Agenda_

Basically ‘Anwar’s agenda’ contained not much more than a hope that a helping hand might stop the devil from taking the hindmost.

No one really kept a tally of its real achievement as opposed to the rhetorical satisfaction it gained from ‘being concerned with’ low-cost housing, low-cost healthcare, helping the poor, and assisting the dislocated. (After July 1997, for example, Anwar tended to the SMI’s, small and medium industries, the little guys of the industrial system but without much in the way of available funds.)

One final instance, however, tells us something novel. Whereas Mahathir urged Malaysian conglomerates to conquer markets in far-flung places, Anwar seemed excited about sending Yayasan Salam, Malaysia’s ‘peace corps’, to poor places.

That was like spreading ABIM’s Yayasan Anda across the world! It tells us that Anwar’s common threads were perhaps woven across his UMNO phase as well, as it were, in a coexistence of pro- and anti-establishment sentiments.

In the early to mid-1990s, Mahathir wanted an East Asian Economic Caucus and spoke an authoritarian language of ‘Asian values. Anwar wrote _The Asian Renaissance_ and acquired the idiom to go with his moral economy: civil society, universal values, empowerment and sustainable development.

All this shouldn’t make us overstate the policy differences between Anwar and Mahathir (and Daim) that combined with personal considerations to force their showdown after July 1997.

It’s sufficient, though, that Anwar’s ideological threads had garnered a perspective on globalisation that allowed for ‘creative destruction’ where Mahathir only saw conspiracy and speculation.

Seen in this light, Anwar was a putative anti-Mahathirist even before the roof collapsed on East Asia.
New Or Old Anwar?

Likewise, one shouldn’t be blind to Anwar’s habitual use of the ‘standard operating procedures’ of UMNO politics under Mahathir.

Before Anwar’s fall, corporate bosses cultivated the PM-to-be, and wheeler-dealers queued to receive his blessings. His lieutenants took charge where they could, out-bidding, out-influencing and dominating rivals in the party and government. His think tankers and academic advisers used public institutions, universities and foundations to conduct politically motivated ‘research’.

Had Anwar gone on to become PM, many of these people would have become influential beyond their dreams and those ways of pushing Anwar’s agenda would have been institutionalized.

In politics, it’s always risky to trust to the supposed virtues of individual leaders. Yet it’d be a mistake to overlook the common threads in a man’s worldview and ideological commitments. Few people can long behave inconsistently, guided only by opportunism.

Hence, we must ask: come a time when Anwar is re-injected into the political scene, what will Anwar’s past common threads and anti-Mahathirism amount to? Will we then see a new Anwar?

I have been asked this question several times and I have asked it of many friends. None of us has the answer but most believe that much depends on what Anwar has learnt from these past three years.

In the first days of September 1998, Anwar’s hour of need, the politicians and corporate bigwigs who fought to rub shoulders with the ‘anointed successor’ were conspicuously absent. But just when everything seemed lost, thousands and thousands of ordinary people – unnamed students, youth, and members of civil society – rallied to his cause.

Anwar recounted this in Permatang Pauh when he launched Reformasi. He declared he finally knew who his real friends were. They were not the rich corporate and powerful political types whom he’d helped but who abandoned him at the drop of a hat. His real friends, he said, were the common folk whose support allowed him to reinvent himself.

The Experience Of Defeat

It’s fashionable in reformasi quarters to call him DSAl. In political terminology, we can call him a populist. Populism is notoriously difficult to define since populists come in many shades and shapes. Some of them project latent fears and prejudices which can be quite outlandish and disheartening.

The more promising populists purport to articulate the basic interests of ‘the people’, ‘grassroots’ and ‘communities’, in opposition to big business and insincere government, of course, but without demonising others, such as foreigners or minorities of one kind or another.

It’s possible to interpret one part of Anwar’s populism as an expression of his pet caring civil society: assistance for the poor, compassion for the disadvantaged and guidance for our ‘lost youth’. In the present circumstances, another part lies in his anti-establishment criticisms of corruption, authoritarianism and the lack of respect for human rights which today find its broadest appeal in reformasi.

At its best, what populism can promise in our post-crisis situation is a voice that expresses more than nostalgia for rapid growth and a high KLSE index. What it should promise is a programme of socio-economic reform that is not limited to an economic revival that ‘restores investor confidence’ only to the extent of advancing influential domestic interests and foreign investments.

Given his past, will Anwar have a better inkling than most of popular issues such as secure jobs, decent careers, better conditions of work, caring social policies, improved public facilities, meaningful social security measures, upgrading of education, and so on?

If Anwar returns, will he fall back upon his UMNO ways of doing things, only to comfort an uneasy conscience with the bombastic rhetoric favoured by his former speech writers?

Or will he express the concerns of ‘the people’ – including students, youth and civil society who have stood by him – in workable social, economic and political programmes?

The truth is, no one knows. And only time – and Anwar’s experience of defeat – will tell.
The journey from Ulu Klang to Kamunting takes about three hours.
Our family leaves from home at about 7 a.m. every weekend to meet my husband, who has been at the Kamunting Detention Camp since 2 June 2001.

Our friends and relatives take turns in accompanying us, using their cars or vans. This lightens the burden of travel expenditure including the tolls, which comes up to about RM56 for a return journey.

Every time we pass by Gua Tempurung near Ipoh, we recall the time when we as a family joined our children’s school exploratory expedition there in 1999. Every year, we organise family activities such as camping, jungle-trekking, mountain-climbing, and cave and recreational forest exploration. Through these activities, my husband trained us to be resilient, to be independent, to build self-confidence, and to appreciate Nature as God’s creation.

Most importantly, these activities helped to increase the love and respect between our children and us. Every time my husband took us mountain-climbing, it was a lesson in building confidence and resilience.

He would give our children and me every encouragement to persevere in our ascent until we reached the peak. When we succeeded in conquering the summit, after struggling during the ascent, it brought fresh insights. It was a huge lesson for us: we would not be easily vanquished in life and we would overcome all difficulties in life the same way we succeeded in conquering the mountain.

Today, I was busy organising our teenage children who are taking part in the Bukit Taboh Expedition in Ulu Klang. I could not join them because the wives of the other detainees and I had our own programme. My life now is not the same as it was before.

In those days, I could sew our children’s clothes myself and manage the household besides helping with my husband’s work. Now, every day, I focus on the weekly 45-minute meeting with my husband in Kamunting. The preparations for the trip have become a routine before our departure for Kamunting.

Although the journey to and fro and the visiting time take up a whole day, it is something we eagerly await. We miss him and he too looks forward to our visits. Since 10 April 2001, love has been snatched from us. We cannot talk over the phone even though we are separated by great distance. Only one letter from him every week. Our 45-minute visit is so precious to us, who have to bear the consequences of the ISA’s cruelty.

We are allowed to bring along three categories of fruit. One category comprises apples, pears, oranges, guava and kiwi fruit (12 pieces in all). The second category is made up of rambutans, longan, grapes, langsat, and bananas - 1 kg only. The third category is durians and nangka, also 1 kg.
We are also allowed to bring six books (three general reading and three religious) and three magazines. All this material will be vetted and recorded before being handed to my husband.

When my husband was first detained in the Kamunting Camp, he was allowed visits by many relatives including his in-laws and cousins. After a month, the camp authorities listed the immediate family members: only the children and I, my husband’s siblings, his parents, and my parents were allowed to meet him. The other relatives and my friends were only allowed to accompany us to the second gate but were then ordered to turn back and go out of the main entrance.

Actually, there is a waiting shelter in front of the second gate. Each time they give us such orders, our hearts bleed. Sometimes, they are given orders to check out our car boot.

Visiting rules restrict the number of visitors at any one time to five adults. I have taken six of our children who have identity cards. The camp authorities stressed that only five people could meet him first. Only after one of the children had come out could the remaining one enter. Such is the ‘penalty’ imposed on us. How do they have the heart to do such a thing to my children who are innocent.

During the visit, we are separated by gauze netting. Don’t the authorities who implement these ISA rules have families and children of their own? With all the power at their disposal, can they live without their spouses and children beside them? No, they don’t care a bit about our tears - we who have become the victims of their greed and craze for status and position. Their greed has blinded them, made them deaf, and shrouded their hearts. How low and despicable can they get.

**Nightmares**

My children’s feelings and emotions have been in turmoil. They are not excelling in their studies like before. They are more interested in playing and taking part in school co-curricular activities. Perhaps this way, they can forget about the sense of loss they feel over their father’s absence. Perhaps this way they can release themselves from the lingering fear that their mother may be arrested next. It’s not impossible. I was detained in a police cell for a night on 15 July 2001 after dispersing from a peaceful assembly of supporters of justice who were marking the 100th day of my husband’s (and the others’) detention. The 36 people arrested and I were released on bail pending our court hearing on 3-4 October. Perhaps the presence of the police and the Federal Reserve Unit and the water cannon spray continues to give my children nightmares.

The police have lost their people-friendly image. Each time we and the families of the other ISA detainees meet Suhakam - whether to make a complaint relating to our spouses’ detention in Kamunting or to accompany the families of new ISA detainees - red-helmeted police personnel and sometimes FRU trucks can be seen near the Suhakam building. Once, when we were being feted by JIM at an evening reception in the compound of the JIM Complex, they were also there, fully equipped with canes and dogs to disrupt the reception even though it was clear that food had been served and many women and children were present. I couldn’t help asking myself, “Is Malaysia a democracy or a police state?”

My husband and the other five political detainees have been punished by those detaining them. Until now, no evidence has been furnished to substantiate the allegations that the Inspector General of Police has hurled at them. The IGP has slandered them because no evidence can be seen and yet, they continue to be detained under the ISA. The laws of Malaysia are actually sufficient to charge a person for any offence. Why do they still resort to the ISA?

It is clear the detainees are victims of the ISA, which has cruelly violated their human rights. The people cannot accept repressive laws such as the ISA. My husband and his colleagues are not guilty and must be freed immediately. Send them back to the families who love them dearly. My children and I will continue the struggle the same way we persevere in conquering mountain peaks.

The people should not just sit by and watch our suffering...maybe one day the ISA will snare their own loved ones.

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**Aliza Jaffar** is the wife of former JIM president Saari Sungib, who has been detained under the ISA since 10 April 2001.

Aliza’s earlier article, A TEST OF FAITH, can be found in AM21(5) page 26.
Cease All Intimidation Of Students

In any democracy worth its name, students have the right to assemble, to associate, and to express themselves.

Aliran condemns the Barisan Nasional (BN) government’s use of the obnoxious ISA once again, this time to detain two students: Khairul Anuar Ahmad and Mohamad Fuad Mohd Ikhwan.

Aliran demands that Khairul Anuar and Mohamad Fuad be released immediately and unconditionally since the only “crime” they have committed is to protest against the present regime for its authoritarian rule and widespread practice of cronyism.

Aliran also calls upon the BN government to cease all other forms of intimidation of students who have been critical of the government. In recent weeks, such students have been hauled up under the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) or some other coercive act.

In any democracy worth its name, students have the right to assemble, to associate, and to express themselves.

Khairul Anuar Ahmad, 24, an electrical engineering student at Institut Kemahiran MARA (IKM), was detained under the ISA at Dang Wangi police station in Kuala Lumpur on 5 July. He was accompanying six student activists who were told to present themselves there in connection with an anti-ISA demonstration in front of the National Mosque on 8 June 2001.

The police reportedly took a handcuffed Khairul back to his Universiti Bangsar Utama (UBU) office and raided it, seizing various items. The UBU had been promoting the idea of reform through theatre and had been providing free tuition to secondary school students in the working class community around the flats and KTM staff quarters near Bangsar Utama.

Earlier on 25 June, IKM issued a show cause letter to Khairul, accusing him of “being involved in a reformasi motivational workshop intended to spur reformists to carry out plans to overthrow the government via street demonstrations.” Khairul was further accused of showing support, along with 10 other Malay youths, for the protests against the closure of SJK(C) Damansara.

Mohamad Fuad Mohamad Ikhwan, 22, on the other hand, is the president of the Students Representative Council of University of Malaya. He was picked up on 6 July in Jalan Sentul, Kuala Lumpur. The police have claimed that Mohamad Fuad “threatened national security and peace.”

Undeniably, Malaysian students have awakened and are demanding political reforms and are reclaiming their rights as Malaysian citizens. Like older Malaysians, as well as their youthful counterparts in other Southeast Asian countries, Malaysian students are fed up with the way their leaders have abused their power and promoted cronyism and nepotism. Indeed, like youths throughout the world, Malaysian students too are driven by idealism and are striving to build better governments and civil societies. This flame of enthusiasm should be encouraged, especially since it is
non-violent. It should not be snuffed out.

It is in this spirit of idealism that the students have also formed new informal organisations like Gabungan Mahasiswa SeMalaysia (GAMIS) and the Students Against the ISA Movement. This is due to the unnecessary constraints of the UUCA which seek only to prevent Malaysian students from expressing themselves.

The detention of Khairul Anuar and Mohamad Fuad under the obnoxious ISA is the most publicised cases in the recent intimidation of students by the authorities.

Over the past months several other cases of intimidation using the UUCA and other coercive acts have also occurred. Among these are:

- the arrest of seven students for protesting against the ISA in front of the National Mosque on 8 June 2001;
- the expulsion of Rafzan Ramli, a student of Universiti Institut Teknologi MARA (UiTM) on 22 June 2001 for participating in the same protest in front of the National Mosque on 8 June;
- the raiding of the house of Mohd. Faisal Abdul Rahman, the secretary-general of GAMIS and president of PMIUM (Muslim Students Association of the University of Malaya), reportedly on 5 July 2001;
- the querying of three students from the International Islamic University under the UUCA about the launch of anti-ISA protest reportedly on 4 July;
- the raiding of the house of Abu Zaki Ismail, a former student leader at the University of Malaya, now a lecturer in a private college, reportedly on 5 July; and
- disciplinary action being taken against six Universiti Sains Malaysia students belonging to the Chinese Language Society for taking part in a debate on “globalisation” in Singapore without the permission of the USM authorities and for holding press conferences about the matter. One of the students has also been charged for selling an anti-ISA sticker to a USM security guard who was in mufti and he tricked the student into doing so.

It appears, therefore, that the BN government has begun to resort to strong-arm tactics, including the use of the ISA, to prevent students from expressing critical views on crucial issues of the day. Yet it is clear that it is not only the students but an increasing number of Malaysians who have become critical of the government and its handling of issues. However, instead of restoring justice and the rule of law and eliminating cronyism and highhandedness, the BN government further resorts to its arsenal of coercive laws to maintain itself in power.

It is all the more clear why the obnoxious ISA and other coercive laws must be repealed.

In the name of decency and justice, Aliran calls upon the BN government to release Khairul Anuar, Mohamad Fuad and all other ISA detainees immediately.

In the interest of our nation’s future, the BN government should also cease all intimidation of Malaysian youths whose burning sense of idealism concerning justice and democracy should be encouraged, not snuffed out.

Aliran Executive Committee
10 July 2001

Undeniably, Malaysian students have awakened and are demanding political reforms and are reclaiming their rights as Malaysian citizens.
I, HISHAMUDDIN BIN MD RAIS (No. KP: 4154269) a Malaysian citizen of age and now under arrest at the address of Tempat Tahanan Perlindungan, Taiping, Perak Darul Ridzuan hereby vow and state the following:

1. I am the Fourth Appellant named above and am currently under arrest at Tempat Tahanan Perlindungan Taiping in accordance with an order which was given out under Section 8, Internal Security Act, 1960 (ISA). Unless expressly stated, all facts which are deposited within are based on my personal knowledge.

2. My profession before I was arrested was a writer, columnist, and film producer. My academic credentials are a Diploma in French Language from the Catholic University Leuven La Neuve, Basic Art from Brixton College, London and a BA (Hons) in Film, Video and Photography from Westminster University, London.

Arrest

3. I was arrested 10.4.2001 at around 5.30 in the afternoon at my office at No. 52A Jalan Kemuja, Bangsar Utara, Bangsar by a group of policemen. At that time, I was alone in the office when I hear a loud knock on my door. When I opened the door, I found 6 policeman wearing remand uniform and a police officer in uniform who then proceeded to enter my office. The uniformed officer who arrested me did not introduce himself, either by announcing his name or rank until I reached Sentul Police Station where I saw his name and rank on top of a list of my personal belongings. The officer then informed me that I was detained under Section 73(1) Internal Security Act 1960 but I was not told the reasons why I was arrested. My hands were cuffed and I was immediately escorted out of my office. I was not even allowed to switch off my computer or lock my office. When I requested to contact my neighbour to inform him that I had been arrested, I was denied the opportunity to do so on the excuse that I was now in police custody.

4. I was then escorted into an unmarked car and brought to the Sentul Police Station. Upon arriving at the police station, I was taken to a room where all my personal belongings were taken from me and where I saw an officer list down the items. I also noticed that this process was captured on a video recorder by a police officer. I signed the list of items. When I was arrested, the reasons for my arrest were not read out to me. This initial process at the police station took 30 minutes.

5. After that, my hands were cuffed again and a pair of dark glasses were put over my eyes and I was put in a van. The van took me to a destination which I suspected was the Police Remand Centre. I did not know that I was being brought to the Police Remand Centre until I had arrived at Kamunting. Upon reaching the Police Remand Centre, I was given two pairs of shirts and a pair of blue trousers, 1 toothbrush and some toothpaste, 1 green blanket, bathing soap, and a small “Good Morning” towel. I was not supplied with any shoes or any form of protection for my feet. I was then given a pack of chicken rice and some food. After eating I was then placed in my cell.
6. The cell had two beds which were made of cement and plywood. There was also a squat toilet and a water pipe next to it. The room had no window and measured about 12 feet long by 6 feet wide. There was only one ventilation hole in the wall and it was impossible for me to tell night from day. No sunlight was able to enter the room. The room was lit by a red light bulb which was switched on virtually all the time. After three nights in this cell, I was transferred to a newer cell.

7. During the first three weeks, I was barefoot (no shoes or slippers were provided) and I was not given a pillow to lay my head. I was told by the investigating officer that I may be allowed both these items if I cooperated with them, put on good behaviour and gave them all the answers. I was only given slippers and a pillow in the fourth week.

8. On 11.4.2001, at 8.00 a.m., I was given breakfast and then taken to see a doctor in an internal clinic. The doctor on duty was Dr Vasantha. There, blood sample was taken and tested and the doctor also took my blood pressure. I complained to the doctor about my migraine and asked to be supplied with garlic because at that time I was undergoing therapy with garlic. I also informed Dr Vasantha about my hereditary diabetes, and asked for a check on my glucose level. The doctor recorded all my complaints as stated above.

9. At around 10.00 a.m. I was taken to an interrogation room where I was interrogated by five Malay policemen in remand uniform until around 5.00 p.m. The interrogation session was continuous and was only punctuated by lunch breaks from 1.00 to 2.00 in the afternoon. All five of the policemen did not introduce themselves and hid their nametags.

10. The next day and the days following that, the interrogations only started from about 9.00 am until 5.00 pm with only breaks for lunch between 1.00 and 2.00 pm. This process was repeated daily throughout my detention there.

11. After a month, I was taken to a detention cell in another place which I did not recognize. The conditions in this cell were worse and more oppressive compared to my previous cell in the PRC because there was absolutely no space for sunlight or fresh air. The cell did not have any toilet and I was only given a bottle to urinate in at night. The quality of the food and medication was worse and the cell door was rarely open. There was only a panel in the door, enough to fit two observing eyes.

12. When I was detained in the cell, every time I was taken to be interrogated on the third floor, my hands would be cuffed, but I would not have to wear darkened glasses, compared to the PRC where I had to wear darkened glasses every time I was brought to interrogation.

13. When I was first taken to interrogation, I was informed by the interrogating officers that they knew everything about me, my political activities, my movements and my acquaintances. Therefore, I could not lie as they knew everything.

14. I was then instructed to tell everything about myself to them. I told them that I did not know what they wanted from me. They then responded by shouting vicious, lewd, and abusive words at me and tried to denigrate me and threaten me.

15. From the start of the interrogation process, for about four continuous weeks, the questions put to me were a form of mental and emotional torture. I was insulted, shamed and abused with swearing and derogatory words meant to reduce my self-esteem. The worst period of abuse was during the first three weeks of interrogation. Among the vicious abuse hurled at me included:

- You are a coward;
- You are not a Malay;
- You are a traitor;
- You like sucking ... deleted because of excessively obscene references;
- You suck ... deleted because of excessively obscene references;
obscene references;
f. You are useless to this country;
g. Why did you come back to Malaysia?
h. You are a corruptor of the Malays;
i. You are a stooge for the Chinese;
j. You are a foreign agent;
k. You work for the United States;
l. You are Al Gore’s stooge;
m. You aren’t a muslim, you are an infidel, you are damned and you will burn in hell. You will be rejected by the earth when you die.
n. You are an adulterer and you are like PAS, a party of the devil;
o. You eat pigs, snakes and centipedes;
p. You will not be accepted into heaven;
q. You have one foot in the grave;
r. You will die alone;
s. When you die, your body will be thrown away;
t. There will be no grave that will accept your body;
u. You will be fuel for the hellfire;
v. No one will pray for you when you die.

16. On about the eighth day of my interrogation, I was ordered to recite my life story from the time I was in school. One of the interrogating officers started insulting me like this: “We do not want any intellectual stuff from you.” In the middle of the interrogation session, a man who I believed was a higher-ranking officer among the interrogators entered and interviewed me privately. At this juncture, the other interrogating officers left the room. I was accused by the interrogating officer that I had given a speech at Lenggeng where I allegedly incited the people to demonstrate on the streets. I vehemently denied it because I had never gone to Lenggeng and I was not even shown proof of the statement which I had allegedly made.

**Black 14, Kesas and Student**

17. The pattern of interrogation was based on the topics below:

17.1 About my role in the Technical Committee for the Handing over of the People’s Memorandum on 14 April 200, where they referred to that day as “Black 14”. This was brought up on the third day of interrogation. I informed them that that day was not “Black 14” as alleged by them but the day of handing over the memorandum to SUHAKAM. I clarified that my responsibility was to prepare banners only. Among the questions asked were:

a. Whose ideas was it?
b. What did I say in the meeting?
c. How did you plan the program?
d. What was my role in the Technical Committee?

These questions were repeated for the next three to four days because they did not believe my statements.

17.2 My role in the demonstration at the Kesas Highway. They stated that the program was meant to topple the government. I explained to them that my role was to prepare the banners only. I also said that the incident at the Kesas Highway was not a planned demonstration. The owner of the land at Jalan Kebun which was located near the Kesas Highway and the Kota Kemuning toll had donated his land to Parti KeADILan Nasional to build the party’s Selangor headquarters. Many people had the intention of going there to witness the official handing-over ceremony of the land and the declaration that the land would be used for party headquarters in Selangor. Among the questions asked were:

a. What date was the event planned?
b. Who organized the program?
c. What was my role in this program?
d. What was the objective of this program?
e. Who was to give speeches there?

17.3 They asked me about my talks as follows:

a. Who gave speeches?
b. Who invited me?
c. Who I went to the talks with?
d. What time I came back from the speeches?
e. What I said?
f. Who paid the cost for my giving a speech?

17.4 They asked about my involvement with local university students; who was involved in Student Societies; and how I knew about the Student Societies.
Even though I have answered all the questions truthfully, the interrogating officers persistently created their own answers which were contradictory to my statements.

17.5 They asked about the Alternative Front’s Hari Raya Gathering at Jalan Kebun and what my role there was.

17.6 They also interrogated me about my role in holding the theater production of ‘Tok Ampoo’ as well as the content of that particular theater production. Even though I had explained to them about it, they still accused me of writing a play which was anti-government.

**Trying To Mislead**

18. During the third week of my interrogation, they brought an alleged photocopy of my Identification Card. I am sure that what they showed me was a falsified Identification Card and they then threatened me concerning my citizenship status by alleging that:

a. I had entered Malaysia illegally in 1983;

b. I was not a Malaysian citizen;

c. I had hired someone to obtain a falsified IC for myself;

These threats were constantly thrown at me to pressure me in falsely admitting that I was not a Malaysian citizen.

19. I was also interrogated for three days straight about my views concerning Datin Seri Wan Azizah binti Wan Ismail, Lim Kit Siang, Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, Parti KeADILan Nasional, Parti Rakyat Malaysia, DAP and Parti Islam Se-Malaysia. I was asked about how close my relationship with Datin Seri Wan Azizah binti Wan Ismail was.

20. I was also interrogated about my views concerning government policies, especially the University and University Colleges Act (UUCA), the Indah Water privatization project, cultural policies, and the decision to buy back MAS/LRT.

21. The Interrogating Officers tried to influence and mislead me with the following statements:

a. Regarding the existence of a sexual relationship between Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Sukma by saying that they had photos of Dato’ Seri Anwar sodomizing Sukma, Munawar dan Meor. They also told me that Datuk Zahid Hamidi (former Chief of the UMNO Malaysia Youth Movement) after seeing the pictures, immediately mengucap, asked to stop a moment, took his wudhu’ and prayed. Zahid Hamidi had repented after seeing the pictures of Dato’ Seri Anwar and Sukma;

b. They told me that they had proof of Dato’ Seri Anwar Ibrahim’s sexual relationships with prostitutes who were Chinese, Indians and from other races;

c. They also told me that Tun Haniff Omar (former Inspector General of Police) also had proof against Dato Seri Anwar;

d. They told me that Dato’ Seri Anwar was an agent of the United States of America;

e. They told me that Dato’ Seri Anwar was a homosexual;

f. They told me that ... deleted because of excessively obscene references;

g. They said that ... deleted because of excessively obscene references;

h. They told me that there was allegedly an affair between Mohamad Ezam and Nurul Izzah where they had proof of phone calls between the two;

i. They told me that Ezam obtained funds from America;

j. They told me that Ezam had made a written confession;

k. They said that Ustaz Dr. Badrulamin had affairs with many women;
l. They also insulted PAS, Tuan Guru Nik Aziz and Tuan Guru Haji Hadi by saying that they were not Muslims but infidels disguising as Muslims;

m. They also insulted Haji Mahfuz Omar (PAS Youth Chief) by saying that he did not have any knowledge of religion.

These questions and statements were directed at me continuously throughout the whole of my interrogation.

22. Besides the statements above, the interrogating officers also insulted and hurled abuse at me by accusing me of sexual improprieties:

a. How many European women had I slept with? Questions like these were put forward to me repeatedly. Among the questions asked of me repeatedly were ... deleted because of excessively obscene references. Nevertheless, I refused to answer such questions and informed them that it had nothing to do with national security;

b. They told me how Tan Sri Samad Ismail, when he was detained under the ISA, had confessed to sleeping with many women. ... deleted because of excessively obscene references. I did not answer these questions.

Threatening Statements

23. I was repeatedly threatened mentally. Among the incidents and threatening statements were:

23.1 During an interrogation, the Interrogating Officer stood up and pointed his hand at me (in the style as if he was holding a gun in his hand) and said “Kamu hanya berdemo – nanti jika PAS atau Barisan Alternatif menang, kami semua akan turun dengan senjata mengganas di jalan raya. Kami ada pengalaman dan dilatih. Tak sampai seminggu Barisan Alternatif akan bungkus” (“You guys are only demonstrating – if PAS or the Alternative Front wins, we’ll all take to the streets with weapons. We are trained and we have experience. The Alternative Front won’t last a week”)

23.2. “Tidak ada pemimpin yang baik dan terluar kecuali Mahathir”. (“There is no leader greater than Mahathir”)

23.3. “Barisan Nasional adalah tunggak kejayaan negara ini”. (“Barisan Nasional is the source of success of this country”)

23.4 “Kami tidak suka pembangkang terutama KeADILan dan PAS”. (“We don’t like the opposition, especially PAS and KeADILan”)

23.5 “Kami paling berkuasa untuk menurun dan menaikkan sesiapa sahaja di negara ini”. (“We have the ultimate power to raise and bring down anyone in this country”)

23.6 “Kami lebih berkuasa dari Menteri. Malah Menteri ikut cakap kami”. (“We are more powerful than Ministers. Even Ministers do what we say”)

23.7 “Tanpa kami negara ini akan hancur. Kami lebih baik dari CIA dan Mossad. CIA minta bantuan kami untuk berhubung dengan pengganas Arab”. (“Without us, this country would be in ruins. We’re even better that the CIA or the Mossad. The CIA asked for our help to contact the Arab terrorists”)

23.8 “Kami dan ISA adalah kuasa dalam negara ini” (“We and the ISA are the power in this country”)

23.9 “ISA tidak zalim malah perlu diwujudkan untuk keselamatan negara dan baik untuk kerajaan kerana parti pembangkang dapat dipatahkan (“ISA is not unjust but necessary for national security and good for the government because the opposition can be destroyed with it”);

23.10 They showed me walls with scratches and bootprints while describing to me the techniques they used until blood was splattered on the interrogation room walls. They threatened me by saying that they would push detainees forcefully to the wall and beat them until their blood sprayed onto the walls. This was the method that they were going to use
against me if I did not cooperate.

23.11 They warned me that if the people’s support to the Alternativ Front increased, the would use the ISA to detain Mahfuz, Hadi Awang, Dr. Hatta dan Mat Sabu.

Another 60 Days

24. The interrogating officers warned me that if I filed a habeas corpus application, they would detain me again and put me in Police Remand Centre for another 60 days. According to them, the lawyers only wanted money and because of that the habeas corpus applications would not help me.

25. The family visit for me was only allowed after about one and a half (1 ½) months in detention. The visitation was under heavy surveillance by police officers. Before that, I was informed that the family visit was cancelled because of the actions of Mohamad Ezam’s wife. I was then told that my family visit was only because of their mercy.

26. The next day, after the family visit, I was asked about a news report in Malaysiakini concerning comments from my family. I was asked about who spread the news and why my sister did so.

S U H A K A M

27. Two days before the visit from SUHAKAM, senior police officers who were interrogating me came to the interrogation room and informed me that SUHAKAM would come and meet me and that I would have to put on a good appearance to SUHAKAM about the treatment that I was receiving. He tried to obtain my views about SUHAKAM. He tried also to poison my mind about SUHAKAM by saying:

27.1 SUHAKAM was interfering in the police’s work;

27.2 SUHAKAM consisted of American agents paid by Al Gore;

27.3 SUHAKAM was a stooge of KeADILan;

27.4 Without SUHAKAM and lawyers, their work would be easier;

28. They tried to persuade me by saying, “We are looking at all aspects of the meeting. If you give good impression, then I will give a good report-positive views about you to the higher authorities for your early release”. They tried to give a good impression by giving me a new pair of trousers, shirts socks. Besides having my shoes shined, my hair and moustache were also trimmed.

No Question About Allegations

29. Throughout the whole of my detention, I was never asked, questioned or interrogated about bombs, molotov cocktails, firearms or grenade launchers. They never asked me anything about allegations of racial or religious incitement. I was also never asked about allegations of obtaining assistance from martial arts experts. I only knew about this upon reaching Kamunting and reading the press statement which was made by the Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai on11.04.2001 which was shown to me by my lawyer. Among the accusations in the press statement were about activities which were allegedly carried out by myself and the other detainees which jeopardized national security were:

29.1 Carried out steps to obtain explosives, including bombs and grenade launchers;

29.2 Using molotov cocktails, ball-bearings and other dangerous weapons to attack security forces during street demonstrations in October 1998;

29.3 Obtained assistance and support of martial arts experts and influencing a number of ex-security officers; and

29.4 Creating racial tension through religious and racial issues by spreading false news during the by-election at Lunas, Kedah.

I vehemently deny all the accusations above. These allegations which are totally untrue are
nothing more than a vicious slander against me, my fellow detainees and my family.

31. As stated in paragraph 29 above, I was never asked about these accusations that were thrown by the Inspector General of Police through his press statement dated 11/4/2001. They (the police) have also never asked any detailed questions to show the relationship between myself and these unfounded allegations or lies.

No Reasons

32. Throughout my detention, I was never informed about the reasons or causes of my detention. I have never been shown any statement regarding the same matter during or right after my arrest. When I was arrested by the police at my office, I was only told that I was being arrested under Section 73(1) of the Internal Security Act. No further matter was made known to me regarding my arrest until I was informed by my lawyer at Kamunting, that is after I was ordered for further detention under Section 8 of the Internal Security Act by the Minister on reasons of jeopardizing national security.

33. Throughout my detention, I assumed that my detention was because of my political beliefs or my activities which led to my political beliefs or because of the political threat to Barisan Nasional or because of my moral and political support against the mistreatment of Dato’ Seri Anwar Ibrahim, and not because of the reasons given by the Inspector General of Police.

34. The facts that have been deposited herein have only been told in full detail to my lawyer only after I was brought to Kamunting. Nevertheless, when I met with my lawyer, we were constantly being observed by an officer of the Kamunting detention center. The said officer could hear everything that was discussed between myself and the lawyer. My request to discuss my case with the lawyer in private was denied. Because of this, I was not able to discuss openly and in detail with my lawyer. Therefore, I would like to state that this affidavit has been deposited without prejudice to my rights to raise other matters when necessary if I get the opportunity to do so.

35. I have also been advised by my lawyers, and I also believe that this represents a clear violation of my rights under the Federal Constitution.

36. Furthermore, I deny the stated facts which are contained in the Minister’s orders dated 2.6.2001 which were produced under Section 8, ISA regarding myself. A more detailed denial will be done in my appeal regarding my detention under the said Minister’s orders.

37. Therefore, I hereby state that my arrest and subsequent detention on the orders of the Inspector General of Police under Section 73(1) Internal Security Act 1960 is mala fide politically motivated.

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<tr>
<th>Alleged offence</th>
<th>No. of Detainees</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bringing in illegal immigrants</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spreading Shia teachings</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Al Maunah arms heist</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>‘Militant’ reformasi activities</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Involvement in Free Acheh Movement</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Firearms offences</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Counterfeiting</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Falsifying documents</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>69</strong></td>
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Consumers will now be able to demand refunds ‘if they are not satisfied with services rendered, or the quality of the product supplied’, Consumer Affairs Minister Muhyiddin Yassin announced last month. He elaborated: ‘If one has signed up for slimming, driving or computer courses, or tuition classes, and wish to withdraw because of unsatisfactory service, the consumer will be entitled to a refund for the remaining period’. Section 17 of the Consumers Protection Act 1999, apparently, covers all businesses, including foreign companies operating here, which offer contract services for a specific period. Way to go, Muhyiddin.

But what about those services offered by Tenaga, Telekom, the postal service and water authorities, private hospitals and colleges, not to mention IWK? These services have cost more since they were privatized. But the quality of the services rendered has often deteriorated. Horror stories abound. Ask Michael Chong of the MCA Complaints Bureau.

When one begins to add up the various services and projects that have been privatized over the past decades, an interesting question emerges. No, it’s not just how much richer we would all be if we could get refunded for the poor delivery of those services. One wonders what the government does anymore?

A famous theorist of globalisation has remarked that most governments that have privatized and deregulated their economies, nowadays, simply collect taxes, regulate the privatized services and maintain law and order.

But look at the situation in Malaysia. It’s anything but law and order! There’s the KMM threatening violence. There are pedlars hawking pornographic and pirated VCDs and DVDs resulting in heinous rape cases involving the very young to the very old; schoolchildren involved in black metal activities; members of the opposition parties threatening to import arms and what have you belatedly arrested under the ISA; recalcitrant Malaysians publishing without permits; a so-called Human Rights Commission trying to please its foreign masters rather than serve the interest of Malaysians; misbehaving university students and teachers; and even members of the MCA creating pandemonium.

It all adds up to a government not maintaining law and order very well. Can we have a refund of the taxes we have paid?

Wisdom is wisdom. And we should be prepared to acknowledge that even when it comes from the most unlikely of sources. So kudos to Datuk Seri Samy for his insight on the MCA Youth pandemonium: ‘Throwing chairs is not the solution’.

Whence such wisdom? No doubt he has gained much inspiration from Dr M whom he has always acknowledged as his beloved leader. But here’s another clue from The Star 14 Feb 2001: ‘Samy Vellu said that he had been in politics for 42 years and knew what a person was going to say even before he opened his mouth’!

Indeed, although he often talks funny, and looks funnier even when Zenga-suited and Armani-tied, one always suspected that there was much grey matter hidden beneath that beautiful crop of black hair - no hair-brained ... er, I mean hare-brained ideas ... from our hero. After all how could he have otherwise lasted for so long as MIC leader?

But some others differ. If he’s so all-knowing, how come he failed...
to foresee that the BN/MIC would lose the Lunas by-election last November? Instead, he even promised that he would pack up his bags and move permanently to Lunas ‘to serve the people’ if his party lost. Not so smart-lah. Moreover, look at his arithmetic. He could not add 1+1+1 and referred to the bridge-cum-tunnel project connecting Bagan Jermal to Bagan Ajam as the second instead of the third link between Penang island and the mainland. For Penangites, the first link has always been the ferry service. Besides his costing of the bridge-cum-tunnel project amounted only to RM2.3 billion, a ridiculously low estimate considering that the second link had already cost more than $800 million when completed some 20 years ago. Did he miss some hidden costs? Come, come, nobody is saying that he is a mathematical whiz as well. But it must be admitted that this bridge-cum-tunnel third link with a Titanic resort stop on one of the reclaimed islands is quite hair ... oops, sorry, hare-brained.

Q Q Q Q Q
One-Dimensional Dialogues

Umno secretary general Khalil Yaakob recently revealed that a series of meetings would be held between government leaders and university students to educate them on government policies and actions. He insisted that it’s crucial for students to have some knowledge of what’s going on at the governmental level. The students aren’t so wise, apparently.

So far so good. Yes, students ought to expose themselves to current affairs and social issues and, as far as possible, be involved in them especially if they don’t want to be seen as an exclusive group of aloof people.

This is all the more required of the students who come from educational institutions that often pride themselves as centres of academic excellence or, as one of them claims, ‘competing at the international level’.

But to attain all this, students would also have to listen to other groups in society. Ask Samy, for goodness sake. For instance, they may need to have educational dialogues with opposition parties to assess the latter’s positions on certain crucial issues, and also their party policies and programmes. After all, these opposition parties, like the BN, are legal entities and it shouldn’t be considered ‘sinful’ or unlawful if they conduct these dialogues with students. Worse still, a talk by an opposition leader with students shouldn’t be labelled as subversive, and seen as something that would make students fail academically.

Besides, having these ‘other’ dialogues would ultimately force these political organizations to clean up their act when it comes to presenting their case to the students. In other words, political parties, especially those from the ruling coalition, cannot or shouldn’t simply bulldoze their way through campus. At the very least, such keen competition would make these political parties better appreciate the concept of meritocracy.

But if such dialogues continue to remain one-dimensional, both the students and the government would be forever cock-eyed.

Q Q Q Q Q

Fly Me To The Moon

On Friday, 17 August 2001, both The Sun and The Star carried a Bernama report. The Bernama story was based on a ‘commentary’ written by one Amy Ridenour. Amy’s ‘commentary’ was published in The Washington Times (Washington what? Note, Times not Post). Brave Amy sounded a warning to Americans against Islamic fundamentalists.

What me worry, old hat from Mad Magazine, isn’t it? Still, if you strip off Amy’s dross, whaddya get? Virtually an American surat layang saying that America The Beautiful, after being fooled by Khomeini and then the Taliban, is in danger of being ‘fooled a third time’ - by Anwar Ibrahim, Prince of Islamic Fundamentalists.

OK, now, Amy who? Amy’s story had a blurb on her as the ‘president of The National Centre for Public Policy Research, a non-partisan Capitol Hill think tank’. Don’t believe it? She is. See the NCPPR website, www.nationalcenter.org. It tells you a few things that The Washington Times, Bernama, The Sun and The Star didn’t say.

1. Amy’s partner, David, is vice-president of The Centre. So, is the Centre one of those ‘my-partner-and-me’ setups so beloved of Capitol Hill, where everyone’s cosy with everyone else but no one knows who can type? Who cares?

2. Amy & David’s Centre is not ‘non-partisan’. It was established in 1982 to support the Reagan/Bush campaign. It promotes fundamentalism - the ‘free market/conservative American way of life’ dogma, it’s called.
There's a No. 3 but save the best for last.

The whole world and Amy know of Mahathir's epic fights against Captain America, Captain Soros and Captain Gore. Amy & David must know there are people who accuse Anwar of being an agent of the world's largest Temple of the Free Market, the IMF. So, why does a Devotee of Market-ism from the Land of the Free not fight Mahathir? Why does Amy, Princess Warrior from the Home of the Brave, pursue Anwar instead?

OK, here's No. 3, and isn't this delicious?

Who owns *The Washington Times*? The Moonies. And this is not a joke. Now, why didn’t Bernama, *The Sun* and *The Star* tell us about Amy’s ties with The Moonies via the *Washington Times*? No wonder Lim Kit Siang, wise to crap as ever, asked if anyone here paid Amy to tell on Anwar. Only Loonies would do that, wouldn’t they?

No Comments Needed

*• Just in case you missed this item earlier in the year.... According to a Bernama report, a total of 50,113 people have received awards from Malaysia's kings between 1958 and 2000. This is an average of three Malaysians a day over the last 42 years. The parliamentary secretary in the PM’s department, Khamsiyah Yeop (now that’s a neat name deserving an award in itself) revealed that 41% were civil servants and 29% police or military personnel. Politicians also figured prominently.*

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**Laws that Discriminate Against Women Must Be Challenged**

Aliran welcomes the proposal by the government to amend Article 8(2) of the Federal Constitution to enable women to have and enjoy equal rights as men and to ensure they are not discriminated against. The recognition of women, not just as equal partners in the development of this nation but as full participating members of society, has been long overdue.

The amended Article 8(2) would now read “Except as expressly authorized by this Constitution, there shall be no discrimination against citizens on the ground only of religion, race, sex, descent or place of birth in any law or in the appointment of any office or employment under a public authority or in the administration of any law relating to the acquisition, holding or disposition of property or the establishing or carrying on of any trade, business, profession, vocation or employment.”

Aliran views this as an important step taken by the Malaysian government, a signatory (albeit with reservations) since 1995, to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). With this amendment of the Constitution, the other archaic and discriminatory laws and procedures that severely restrict the rights of women can now also be challenged and changed, including the citizenship related laws and Immigration Act 1963.

While welcoming this move by the government, we must be aware that there is no room for complacency. Advocacy for change in the remaining discriminatory laws and procedures must still continue in the institutions that formulate these laws and in the people who implement these laws. It would be naive to conclude that the mere inclusion of the word “sex” in Article 8(2) of the Federal Constitution will bring about gender equality without a mindset that focuses on justice.

Aliran looks forward to the day when there can be true justice and equality for women in Malaysia.

_Dr Prema Devaraj_  
Executive Committee Member  
24 July 2001
aliran congratulates the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) for a job well done. We are particularly happy that their findings have confirmed what the victims of police brutality have been accusing the police of since the Kesas Highway episode.

It is now officially established through its inquiry that:
• the police had acted heavy-handedly;
• the police caused injury to persons in detention and either delayed or denied medical attention to them;
• the police were responsible for the violence that took place;
• the police created the massive traffic jam, which inconvenienced people not involved in the Kesas gathering;
• the police had used excessive force on persons waiting for the traffic to clear;
• the police had acted indiscriminately and in a biased manner in selectively applying the laws relating to assemblies;
• the police had exercised double standards in dealing with demonstrations;
• the police had treated detainees inhumanely, taking advantage of the situation to secure confessions and incriminating evidence.
These are not merely the views of Suhakam as Dr Mahathir would have us believe, but are the findings of a lawful and legitimate inquiry conducted under the authorisation of Parliament, which enacted the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia Act, 1999.

Instead of responding to the findings, which revealed terrible violations of human rights, he is desperately trying to confuse the people.

He says, “The police had given their side of the story and that should be given some weight…”

We would like to ask Mahathir what evidence did the police give?

We understand that:

- many police witnesses gave prepared testimonies and were unwilling to answer impromptu questions from the panel;
- one police officer contradicted himself;
- most stated that answers would be provided by the next witness;
- the next witness would come well prepared to answer the questions that had been put forward earlier but then would not answer any new questions.

Mahathir accuses Suhakam of being “disinclined to make an independent decision based on Malaysian values…”

What are these so-called “Malaysian values” he is alluding to? Are they universal values or Mahathir’s values, which he is trying to impose on the Malaysian people? Can the atrocities committed by the police be considered as “Malaysian values”?

What conclusions would Mahathir draw from the following?

- One man suffered a fractured skull after being struck on the head by a tear gas canister that was aimed at the car Wan Azizah was in.
- One witness had tear gas sprayed into his eyes, resulting in temporary blindness and hospitalisation for nine days.
- Tear gas was sprayed into a truckload of detainees.
- Several others suffered injuries and there was a delay in providing treatment to them; in some cases, medication was not given although doctors had prescribed them.
- A female detainee was ordered to strip and do 10 knee-squats.
- A 17-year-old student, due to sit for her SPM examinations about a week from the day she was detained, was not released despite assurances to the magistrate that she would be released soon.

Can anybody, either from the East or West, condone this barbarity? Do the above atrocities resemble any values that should be cherished?

The Act of Parliament that created Suhakam and empowered them to act was the handiwork of Mahathir’s government, which was desperate to repair its human rights image in the wake of the Anwar black eye episode. But Mahathir rejected any input from other groups, did not allow any public debate or discussion, and instead rushed the Bill through Parliament.

It is this Act which states under “Functions and Powers of the Commission:

4 (i) In furtherance of the protection and promotion of human rights in Malaysia, the functions of the Commission should be:

d) to inquire into complaints regarding infringements of human rights referred to in Section 12.

The Act further states under “Powers of Inquiry of the Commission:

12 (i) The Commission may, on its own or on a complaint made to it by an aggrieved person or group of persons or a person acting on behalf of an aggrieved person or groups of persons, inquire into an allegation of the infringement of the human rights of such person or group of persons.”

Under Section 12 (i), Suhakam was compelled to act on receiving complaints from many victims of human rights infringements. It is a statutory requirement that such an inquiry be held and the findings be made known.

In dismissing the entire findings and in launching a diatribe against the Commission, Mahathir is indeed exposing his desperation and confusion. His words betray his own bias, his one-sidedness and his extreme intolerance of any criticism, however justified. His reaction, though predictable and typical, is totally irrational, illogical and irrelevant. Q
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Detainee</th>
<th>Position/ Organisation</th>
<th>Date Detained</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Duration of Detention</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tian Chua</td>
<td>Vice President, keADILan</td>
<td>10 April</td>
<td>Sent to KDC on 2 June</td>
<td>143 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezam Md Noor</td>
<td>Head, KeADILan Youth (KY)</td>
<td>10 April</td>
<td>Sent to KDC on 2 June</td>
<td>143 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haji Saari Sungib</td>
<td>Former President, JIM</td>
<td>10 April</td>
<td>Sent to KDC on 2 June</td>
<td>143 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hishamuddin Rais</td>
<td>Media columnist/activist</td>
<td>10 April</td>
<td>Sent to KDC on 2 June</td>
<td>143 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Gobalakrishnan</td>
<td>Secretary General, KY</td>
<td>10 April</td>
<td>Freed by HC on 30 May</td>
<td>50 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raja Petra</td>
<td>Director, FAC</td>
<td>11 April</td>
<td>Released on 2 June</td>
<td>52 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abd Ghani Haroon</td>
<td>Central Committee, KY</td>
<td>11 April</td>
<td>Freed by HC on 30 May</td>
<td>49 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Badrul Amin</td>
<td>KeADILan Youth leader</td>
<td>20 April</td>
<td>Sent to KDC on 13 June</td>
<td>133 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lokman Nor Adam</td>
<td>Executive Secretary, KY</td>
<td>24 April</td>
<td>Sent to KDC on 13 June</td>
<td>129 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badaruddin Ismail</td>
<td>Suaram activist</td>
<td>26 April</td>
<td>Released on 5 June</td>
<td>41 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>M. Halimmuddin</td>
<td>Not Known</td>
<td>May/June</td>
<td>2-yr detention order</td>
<td>abt 91 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muhammad Azian</td>
<td>Not Known</td>
<td>May/June</td>
<td>2-yr detention order</td>
<td>abt 91 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nazri Romli</td>
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<td>2-yr restricted residence</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohd Sobri Hassan</td>
<td>PAS member, Puchong</td>
<td>29 May</td>
<td>Released on 10 August</td>
<td>73 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mohamat Iqbal</td>
<td>Ustaz</td>
<td>30 June</td>
<td>In police custody</td>
<td>62 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khairul Anuar</td>
<td>Student activist, I.K. MARA</td>
<td>5 July</td>
<td>Released on 28 July</td>
<td>23 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rashid Ismail</td>
<td>Electrical Technician, Sabah</td>
<td>26 July</td>
<td>In police custody</td>
<td>36 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaafar Karamah</td>
<td>Gems dealer, Tawau</td>
<td>26 July</td>
<td>In police custody</td>
<td>36 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohd Fuad Ikhwan</td>
<td>President, UM Stdt Council</td>
<td>6 July</td>
<td>Released on 16 July</td>
<td>10 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noor Ashid</td>
<td>Youth chief, Sg. Benut PAS</td>
<td>2 August</td>
<td>In police custody</td>
<td>29 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajuddin Abu Bakar</td>
<td>Youth chief, Larut PAS,</td>
<td>2 August</td>
<td>In police custody</td>
<td>29 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salehan Abd Ghaffar</td>
<td>PAS activist, K. Terengganu</td>
<td>2 August</td>
<td>In police custody</td>
<td>29 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alias Ngah</td>
<td>PAS activist, K. Terengganu</td>
<td>2 August</td>
<td>In police custody</td>
<td>29 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zainun Ismail</td>
<td>Ex-PAS branch exco, Baling</td>
<td>2 August</td>
<td>In police custody</td>
<td>29 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abu Bakar Che Doi</td>
<td>Kg Tembok PAS, Baling</td>
<td>2 August</td>
<td>In police custody</td>
<td>29 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aspawani Abdullah</td>
<td>Kg Tembok PAS, Baling</td>
<td>2 August</td>
<td>In police custody</td>
<td>29 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ahd Fauzi Deraman</td>
<td>PAS supporter, Johor</td>
<td>2 August</td>
<td>In police custody</td>
<td>29 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mohd Luthfi Ariffin</td>
<td>Kedah PAS youth exco</td>
<td>3 August</td>
<td>In police custody</td>
<td>28 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nik Adli Nik Aziz</td>
<td>Pulau Melaka PAS member</td>
<td>4 August</td>
<td>In police custody</td>
<td>27 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KDC - Kamunting Detention Centre in Taiping, Perak  
HC - High Court
idwan was just 14 years old when his father was taken away by the Indonesian special command forces (Kopassus), in March 1991. While searching for his father over the next three days, Ridwan estimates he saw 20 corpses.

“Each day we would hear of more bodies – we would go immediately to see if it was my father – we would find them on the side of the road, in plantations and in other places,” he said.

On the third day, they found his father’s body in a plantation. He had been shot in the head and there was a 15cm nail through his skull. His arms and legs had been cut and his hands were swollen from having been tied up.

When Kopassus troops came to their home a week later seeking documents, they threw Ridwan to the ground and smashed his hand with a stone for trying to help his mother who only spoke Acehnese.

Ridwan and his family are among thousands of people in the province of Aceh, North Sumatra, who have suffered terrible human rights violations during the course of counter-insurgency operations by the Indonesian security forces against the pro-independence armed opposition group, Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM), the Free Aceh Movement. Several thousand civilians are believed to have been unlawfully killed between 1989 and 1998.

Although recent government initiatives to investigate past human rights violations have raised hopes that impunity may finally be tackled, the cycle of violence continues. A whole generation of young Acehnese has been affected. Thousands of children whose parents have been killed or have “disappeared” continue to be obstructed in their attempt to find out the fate of their loved ones now, and even risk becoming victims themselves.

Women Also Affected

Women have also been among the thousands of victims of extrajudicial execution, “disappearance”, arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment by the security forces in the Indonesian province of Aceh over the last ten years. Serious human rights violations, including rape and other forms of sexual abuse of women and girls, continue to be carried out by the security forces as a form of intimidation and as punishment for suspected support for GAM. GAM has also been responsible for committing human rights abuses against women in Aceh.

There are no precise figures for the total number of women who have suffered human rights violations in the province, including gender-specific violations such as rape. In August 1998, the National Commission on Human Rights (Komisi Nasional Hak Asasi Manusia, Komnas HAM) reported that it had received details of 102 cases of rape during the course of its investigations into human rights violations committed between 1989-98. However, rape in Aceh, in common with situations elsewhere, tends to be under reported. The shame associated with rape, fear of reprisals and the absence of institutional mechanisms to investigate and bring the perpetrators to justice all act as deterrents to reporting such violations.

In a situation where human rights abuses both by the security forces and GAM against the civilian population are widespread, humanitarian workers and human
rights defenders face particular risks in their work. At the very least they must endure the "stop and search" operations by the security forces which take place at frequent intervals along roads, fear of inadvertently being caught in an exchange of gunfire and other risks associated with working in an area of armed conflict.

Since early 2000, however, there have been worrying signs of increased attacks on civilians, in particular human rights defenders, lawyers, humanitarian workers, student activists and journalists. Activist student groups that have set up centres throughout the region for monitoring human rights violations, are also at particular risk of intimidation and attack. There are also reports of cases of harassment and intimidation of activists by GAM.

As is the case generally in Indonesia, investigations into human rights violations in Aceh, including those against human rights defenders and other activists, are rarely carried out. With few exceptions, perpetrators are not brought to justice.

**Background**

Aceh is situated in the northernmost part of the island of Sumatra, about 1,000 miles from the Indonesian capital of Jakarta. It has a population of around three-and-a-half million people. The Acehnese are often regarded as having a long tradition of resistance to domination by outside authorities. Over the past quarter of a century dissatisfaction with Indonesian rule has been largely rooted in economic grievances related to inequalities in the distribution of revenues drawn from the province’s extensive natural resources. Opposition to the Indonesian government has been further fuelled by the repressive policies employed by the security forces in Aceh.

In December 1976, the recently formed armed opposition movement, GAM, declared Aceh to be an independent state. The government responded with force and GAM was largely destroyed within a few years. However, in 1989 GAM re-emerged and carried out a number of attacks against police and military installations which led to renewed military operations in the province.

Counter-insurgency operations by the Indonesian security forces resulted in gross human rights violations, a large number of which were committed against the civilian population. Amnesty International estimates that between 1989 and 1993, two thousand civilians, including children and the very elderly, were unlawfully killed and at least 1,000 people were arbitrarily arrested. Many were held in incommunicado detention and subjected to torture or ill-treatment. Although the levels of violations declined in the following years, regular reports of unlawful killings, "disappearances", arbitrary arrest and torture continued to be received.

Thirty-two years of authoritarian rule in Indonesia ended in May 1998 when former President Suharto was forced to resign in the face of massive popular opposition. The fall of the Suharto government heralded a new era of reform leading to expectations for change throughout Indonesia, including in Aceh.

**Expectations For Change**

A number of government statements and initiatives provided some basis for optimism. On 7 August 1998, General Wiranto, the Armed Forces Commander at the time, offered an apology for the actions of members of the armed forces in Aceh. He also announced that Aceh’s status as a military operations area (Daerah Operasi Militer - DOM) would be lifted and that all non-organic troops would be withdrawn. A number of investigations into human rights violations during the previous ten years were also initiated, bringing hope to victims and their families that justice would be done.

Hope proved to be short lived. At the end of 1998 the human rights situation began to deteriorate again following a number of attacks on military and police personnel and installations in December. Despite doubts about who was responsible, the authorities blamed the attacks on GAM and responded by launching Operasi
Wibawa 99 (Operation Authority 1999) in early January 1999, during which scores of people were arrested and dozens killed.

This has been followed by a series of further operations throughout 1999 and 2000. Although these have been headed by the police, they differ little from earlier military operations in that they have been characterized by serious and widespread human rights violations against civilians. The nature of the violations are strikingly similar to those perpetrated in the early 1990s and include unlawful killings, “disappearances” and arbitrary detention. Figures are difficult to determine with any degree of accuracy, but it is estimated that hundreds of people have been unlawfully killed over the past two years. Torture and ill-treatment is routine both inside and outside police or military custody as a means to extract confessions or as a form of punishment or intimidation. Although scores of alleged GAM members have been detained in the past two years, few cases have ever come to trial.

Referendum And Ceasefire

Growing levels of repression are widely seen to have contributed to increased levels of support for a referendum on Aceh’s political future among the population of Aceh. Pressure in support of a referendum reached its height in late 1998 when, on 8 November 1999, over one million people attended a pro-referendum rally in Banda Aceh, the provincial capital. A second pro-referendum rally took place on 10-11 November 2000. However, the security forces

WHO IS GAM?

Who or what is GAM? How does it operate? Reports in the Indonesian media suggest that there are two distinct factions.

The 'original group', led by Hasan Tiro (who resides in Sweden), describes itself within Aceh/Indonesia as GAM/AGAM (Angkatan Gerakan Aceh Merdeka). Abroad this faction describes itself as the ASNLF (Aceh-Sumatra National Liberation Front), laying claim not only to the whole of Aceh, but also to some of the rest of Sumatra.

The other faction is the MP-GAM (Majelis Pemerintahan Gerakan Aceh Merdeka - Free Aceh Movement Government Council), led by Don Zulfahri, alias Don Malindo, who is reportedly based in Thailand, and Dr. Husaini Hasan (formerly a member of Hasan Tiro’s group), domiciled in Sweden.

Until recently, Hasan Tiro’s faction denounced any compromise with the Indonesian government. However, in January 2000, Baharuddin Lopa, the then Indonesian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, met with GAM’s high commander in Aceh, Abdullah Syafi’ie, in Banda Aceh for talks. The MP-GAM have throughout appeared more willing to engage in talks with the Indonesian government and to favour more diplomatic approaches to resolving the problem. However, this group is also considered to be more uncompromising in its views.

Potentially the most important distinction between the two lies in their respective concepts of what kind of state the newly independent country should have. Hasan Tiro’s faction emphasises that Aceh should be restored as a Sultanate, whilst the MP-GAM favour the formation of an Islamic Democracy.

blocked people from travelling to Banda Aceh to participate including by opening fire on convoys of vehicles. The total number of people killed remains unconfirmed but is thought to be over 20.

In the meantime, Abdurahman Wahid’s government engaged in initiatives towards entering into a dialogue with GAM. In May 2000 an accord was signed under which both parties agreed to halt offensive operations to allow the distribution of humanitarian aid and prepare the ground for further negotiations on ending the conflict. Known as the “Joint Understanding on Humanitarian Pause for Aceh”, it came into force on 2 June 2000 for a period of three months. The agreement initially appeared to result in a decrease in the level of human rights violations. However, within a matter of weeks reported incidents of abuses by both the security forces and GAM escalated once again.

On 24 September 2000 the agreement was extended by an additional three months, until 15 January 2001. At the same time both sides agreed to take all necessary measures to improve the effectiveness of the “humanitarian pause” and reconfirmed their commitment to the early and safe return of internally displaced persons (IDPs), to prevent any new exodus and to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers.

Amnesty International welcomed the acknowledgment by both sides of the importance of measures to protect those working with IDPs and other victims of human rights violations in Aceh. However, despite these commitments, violations have continued, causing further internal displacement, and cases of violations against human rights defenders, humanitarian workers and other activists have also been reported since the extension of the agreement. An essential component of effective protection must be that those suspected of responsibility for carrying out violations against humanitarian and human rights activists are brought to justice.

GAM Abuses

Members of GAM have also been responsible for human rights abuses in Aceh both before and after 1998. Information on GAM abuses is often difficult to verify, and is further confused by the many reported cases of abuses which are attributed by the authorities and in the media to unknown third parties. However, there are credible reports of unlawful killings, abductions and torture being carried out by GAM members against both members of the security forces and civilians. Other victims have included alleged military informers and people suspected by GAM of being criminals. There are also credible reports of threats, intimidation and other abuses by GAM against local government officials,

Continued on page 34

BRIEF HISTORY

Acehnese proudly remember Sultan Iskandar Muda (ruled 1607-36), who made Aceh the most powerful state in the region. Europeans began seriously to press in during the imperialistic nineteenth century. In 1873 the Dutch launched a costly and bloody war against Aceh. Despite superior arms, it took them four decades to win effective control against Acehnese guerrilla tactics.

When Indonesia proclaimed its independence in 1945, Acehnese leaders lent crucial support. But they were disappointed that Jakarta gave Islam and themselves, far less importance than they had hoped. Aceh joined a major regional rebellion in 1953. Fighting wound down after the Acehnese won an agreement with Jakarta in 1959 that extended autonomy to Aceh.

In 1971 Mobil Oil discovered massive natural gas reserves in North Aceh. The Lhokseumawe liquid natural gas plant became the biggest in the world, supplying 30 per cent of Indonesia’s oil and gas exports. Industries mushroomed around it, and with it pollution and social disruption.

However, the Acehnese were well aware there was little in it for them. This was perhaps the main reason for the resurgence in 1989 of an Acehnese secessionist movement that had been led for years by Hasan di Tiro from his exile in Stockholm. The military crackdown that followed left deep wounds in Acehnese society that are only now being exposed.

Source: IRIP News Service
Aliran wholeheartedly applauds Justice Muhammad Kamil Awang for his honesty, courage and sense of public duty.

Justice Muhammad has been admirably honest and courageous in refusing to submit to a directive from someone supposedly his superior in the judicial hierarchy to strike off, without hearing, the Likas election petitions.

Equally Justice Muhammad has demonstrated a high sense of public duty in refusing to cover up that attempt to subvert the course of justice in one of the High Courts of the country.

However, the time for guessing games is past.

While it was entirely proper for Justice Muhammad to inform Chief Justice Mohamed Dzaidin Abdullah about the ‘mysterious caller’ first, the caller’s identity cannot be allowed to remain a mystery or a matter of speculation.

The fact is, too many unsavoury episodes that have struck at the reputation of our judiciary have been allowed to remain unsolved mysteries.

To take some notable examples:

- The investigation of a surat layang purportedly containing a judge’s allegations of corruption against other judges was terminated by then Attorney-General Mohtar Abdullah without the public being any wiser as to the truth of the allegations.
- If at all a thorough investigation was conducted into allegations that lawyer V K Lingam’s office was responsible for drafting a judgment made in a High Court case, the result of the investigation has not been publicly disclosed.
- The investigation of improprieties and unethical conduct linking former Chief Justice Eusoffe Chin with lawyer V K Lingam was also inconclusive.

Consequently, the Malaysian public is by now sick and tired of hearing allegations of tampering with the judicial system that lead nowhere – no cases, no culprits and no penalties.

It would therefore make a complete mockery of Justice Muhammad’s honesty, courage and sense of public duty if this latest episode of alleged judicial misconduct is allowed to die a quiet death.

That kind of quiet death is the NATO – ‘no action, talk only’ – kind that the public associates with the Barisan Nasional government’s reluctance or inability to deal with the perceived rot within our system of administration of justice.

In the past few weeks, however, several judges have shown that it is possible for politically weak and commercially powerless citizens to obtain redress in our Courts.

For the record, there have been

- Justice Mohd Hishamudin Mohd Yunus’s declarations that the use of ISA is unlawful
- Justice Ian Chin’s decision protecting native customary rights of marginalized Sarawakian communities, and
- Justice Muhammad Kamil Awang’s nullification of the Likas election.

The reputation of the Malaysian
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judicial system has suffered serious setbacks in recent years. Yet in recent weeks, honest, courageous and impartial judgments have been delivered.

Whichever way the judicial system moves in the near future – towards decline or resurgence – will depend on how much the problems of the judicial system can be resolved, so that the rule of law can operate freely and judges can conduct their cases without fear or favour or directives.

In the light of these developments, Aliran calls for the establishment of a Royal Commission of Inquiry which will comprehensively and without compromise investigate many of the outstanding allegations of impropriety, misconduct and interference in our judicial system.

The arrests of 10 alleged members of the Malaysian Mujahidin Group under the Internal Security Act has further revealed the Barisan Nasional government’s inability to understand the nature of Malaysia’s current political ferment.

The ban on ceramahs appears aimed at cutting off yet another of the few remaining avenues for dissenting views to be communicated to the people. The ban on public sales of CDs and VCDs will also prevent opposition parties from reaching out to the public.

Without doubt, the BN government appears to be on a rampage. It seems to be resorting to the ISA and other repressive means to stem dwindling public support for the ruling coalition. All sorts of unsubstantiated accusations to justify its actions have been hurled.

The BN badly needs to do some serious soul-searching to find out why there is so much disillusionment and dissatisfaction among the public. It must immediately release all ISA detainees or charge them in open court if there is any shred of evidence. It should stop vilifying students and the youth. It should heed Suhakam’s recommendations on public assemblies and other issues related to human rights instead of dismissing its views outright.

Perhaps only then will it be able to succeed in winning friends and influencing people.
Letters should be no more than 250 words and must include the writer's name and address. Pseudonyms may be used. Send letters to: Editor, ALIRAN MONTHLY, 103, Medan Penaga, 11600 Penang, Malaysia or e-mail to: aliran_letters@hotmail.com Views expressed need not reflect those of Aliran.

**Identify The Caller**

The Malaysian Bar calls on High Court Judge Datuk Muhammad Kamil Awang to immediately lodge a police report against the caller who had directed him over the phone to strike out an election petition without hearing it. In the police report, the learned Judge will be obliged to identify the caller.

It is essential that the caller be identified publicly at the earliest possible opportunity so as to avoid unnecessary speculation by the public. It is important that this serious allegation be investigated and the person responsible be brought to book immediately so as to maintain public confidence in the judiciary.

The further allegation by the learned Judge that several other Judges in Sabah and Sarawak had at the material time confided in him that they too had also received similar directive from the same person on the election petitions before them, is cause for grave concern as there appears to have been a series of acts done to pervert the course of justice and to obstruct the Judges in the discharge of their public functions.

The Malaysian Bar commends the learned Judge for having the integrity and courage to bring this matter out into the public domain rather than to ignore or pretend that the incident did not happen as this will in a way help to enhance the image of the judiciary.

Mah Weng Kwai
President
Bar Council

**Minimum Wage and Discrimination**

The legitimate rights of Malaysian workers for minimum wage to overcome the below subsistence level of income and to mitigate inflationary pressures should be supported by all Malaysians. Wages should support families, and market forces cannot ensure fair wages for all. While the endeavour for a just wage at the macro level should be pursued relentlessly with the authorities there is a dire need to look at the subtle oppression that takes place at the micro level of some individual companies in the non-union environment.

There are three areas of discrimination that needs to be addressed:

**Ethnic Discrimination**

There are ethnically inclined employers who pay wages based on ethnic considerations. It is sad that there has never been a survey on the part of the authorities on the extent of ethnic discrimination in the private sector. Furthermore there is an absence of legislation to protect the workforce from racially inclined employers. Such discrimination goes against the fundamental understanding of human rights.

**Productivity Paradox**

The Government always asserts that any increase in wages should commensurate with an increase in productivity. Such a concept is not strictly adhered in the non-unionized environment, where wages are determined by the goodwill of employers and strategic necessity.

**Denial of Training And Educational Opportunities**

In order to increase productivity, a trained and educated work
force is vital. Some employers are reluctant to send their workers for training or education, fearing that such training and education could result in a demand for higher wages and the possibility of job-hopping.

Therefore it is vital for the government to come up with minimum wage legislation to promote social justice. The lack of transparency on wage issues among employers has created a certain degree of mistrust and such a working environment is not conducive to maintain fruitful long-term employer-employee relationships in Malaysia. To be fair to employers, it is not realistic to have a standard wage across the country because of disparity in the cost of living in the various states. A minimum wage should take into consideration the socio-economic realities of the life of a labourer and also the inflationary differentials between States.

Ronald Benjamin
Ipoh

ISA: No Fear Of God?

It brings tears to my eyes to read of the unnecessary pain and suffering caused to innocent citizens especially women and children as a result of the unnecessary actions by police in their over-zealousness to please their Masters and the abusing of power in the process. Do they have any inkling how wrong their actions are?

I was surprised last week to see the Police Chief and police personnel attending a Forum Hal Ehwal Islam on TV1 which spoke against injustice and that it is incumbent upon the police to act fairly and justly and uphold the law as they were meant to do. If all the police personnel listened in to that forum and followed the path of God I don’t think that they would act as they did. The fear of God should deter anyone in committing such atrocious crimes against other fellow beings. I guess the interrogators should relearn how to think, feel and act as humans again. Having been so used to the practice of torturing people all these years, they must have lost track of their own beings and lost their soul. May God help us all.

My prayers go out to those detained under the ISA and may all Malaysians especially those in power rise to the occasion and do the right thing to uphold justice and ensure fairness for all human beings.

Kak Marina
via e-mail

Mahathir’s Remarks
No Different From Colonial Masters

During the UMNO general assembly in June the party President, Dato Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad lamented that the Malays are not doing well academically, suffering from low self-esteem and are socially and economically backward when compared to the other communities in the country.

The remarks by Dr Mahathir about the Malays are no different from what the British colonial masters used to say about the natives of Malaya.

Since the 1970s, there have been more intermarriages between Malays and the other ethnic groups such as Chinese, Indians, Iban, etc., producing truly Malaysian children and this new generation of Malays are better educated, fluent in English, capable of making independent decisions and are able to think critically and rationally. They are more enterprising and less dependent on the government for jobs. Most of them are successful professionals, businessmen and entrepreneurs. They also have a better understanding of Islam and their rights as Muslims.

During colonial times, Malay society consisted of the ruling class and the rakyat but now we have a new class of Malays. Does this not reflect a success story of the Malays?

Poverty is not only confined to the Malay community but there are also many poor Chinese, Indians and other Malaysians living in urban slums, squatter areas, jungle fringes and off-shore settlements without basic amenities. The only reason poor Malays get more attention is that UMNO is the main Malay political party in the BN Government.

Each society has its own rate of development and if the target set by the government has not been achieved within a stipulated period e.g. when implementing the New Economic Policy, it does not mean failure on the part of the Government or the community. We should not compare the abilities and achievements of our people with those from other developed countries for we do not share the same history.

Why should Malay political leaders feel frustrated if not a single Malay is listed with Robert Kuok
or Ananda Krishnan in Forbes Fortune magazine? Acquisition of wealth is not the only indicator of a person’s success in life.

**Judiciary Fiasco**

As a Malaysian, I am hurt and my conscience is battered. What do I tell my many foreign friends about the truth of our judiciary? I am referring to the latest episode. (A great legacy of the past is gone.) What do I tell my children one day? Do I tell them the truth? If my conscience is hurt as a commoner, how about the retired judge involved. How is he going to face society? I have read of corrupt regimes and the fall of several empires in the past due to such injustices......but now it is happening on my door-step.

I am ashamed to be a Malaysian. But at least I can be proud to have voted for the opposition. I believe those who have voted for the ruling party should be feeling equally hurt, i.e. if they are fair-minded Malaysians.

**Stop Victimising The Victims**

Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu’s outburst and intimidation of the Kampung Medan victims is unwarranted and unbecoming of a national leader.

The Group of Concerned Citizens (GCC) welcomes the presentation of compassionate aid by the National Unity and Social Development Ministry to the victims of the Kampung Medan racial attacks at a ceremony on July 6, 2001. The compassionate aid, we believe, is an acknowledgement of the plight of the victims and their families.

However, GCC is dismayed at the anger and bitterness shown by Samy Vellu towards the victims of the Kampung Medan violence at the event. He lambasted the victims, and accused them of not recognising all the aid that the MIC and the government had rendered during the crisis. More importantly, the minister accused the victims as ingrates for allegedly criticising the MIC following the extension of RM500 to each of the victims by “a group” (referring to the GCC) in a simple ceremony on June 16, 2001 [The Star, July 7, 2001].

The outburst of the minister is unwarranted, and such behaviour, we fear, displays a total disregard for the plight of the victims. We therefore consider the outburst, and the intimidation that followed, as further victimisation of the victims.

We appeal to the minister to reject the politics of intimidation and patronage that was central to the functioning of the feudal order but which certainly does not have a place in a democratic society like ours. National leaders should embrace the politics of compassion; high principles and ideals should dictate the policies preferred. These, we believe, are central tenets of good governance. In the case of Kampung Medan, the victims are clearly in need of compassion and understanding as part of their healing process; further abuse is not the answer — it is inhumane.

It is the right of the victims — as citizens — to expect support from the government in times of urgent need. They also possess every right to criticise the administration when they perceive a failure in the part of their elected representatives to perform their duty.

We feel the MIC president should not divert attention from certain core issues. He needs to explain several issues to the community and the nation.

Firstly, Datuk Seri Samy Vellu had suggested that the Kampung Medan violence was an organised crime. We would like to know the steps the MIC president has taken to ensure that all the perpetrators of the ghastly acts are brought to justice. We urge the minister to persuade the Cabinet to establish an independent commission of inquiry into the racial assaults. There is a minority community, which wants to know why Indian Malaysians were targeted.

Secondly, the government took approximately 80 days (the first week of July) to approve the application for financial allocation which was submitted on April 10. Common sense and compassion would dictate that victims would need financial and material support in the early stages of the recovery process. As a result of the delay, some of the victims faced grave difficulties in the initial period. Why the delay? It appears that the government was persuaded to approve the application for ‘compassionate aid’ as a response to the efforts of civil so-
ciety to highlight the victims’ plight. Clearly then, there is an important and justified role for civil society.

Thirdly, the government’s ‘compassionate aid’ of RM10,000 for widows and between RM2,000 and RM3,000 for the injured is inadequate. While any financial aid is welcomed, a caring government should go the extra mile and consider the following: widows and the seriously wounded including the maimed should be given a fixed payment of RM1,500 per month for the next ten years including free education for children. Also, the government should bear the cost of reconstructive surgery for individuals who lost use of limbs.

In addition, the government should absorb the cost of rehabilitation and re-skilling of individuals who are unable to work in their respective jobs because of the injuries. The government should also provide free low-cost housing for widows and the seriously wounded. The victims will experience a double tragedy if the government neglects their needs and rights. Indeed it is the moral responsibility of a democratically elected government to respond to the plight and aspirations of a marginalised group in the country.

It is important for government and political leaders to discard the practice of patronage and subservience, elements of the old era, if they and their political parties want to stay relevant and confront the problems of the 21st century.

Jalaldin Hamid
Spokesman
Group of Concerned Citizens
Kuala Lumpur

GAM has also been responsible for intimidating and threatening activists. One humanitarian group in Banda Aceh reported in May 2000 that its members had been threatened with death and told that their office would be bombed by individuals who had identified themselves as members of GAM. Since then, several of the humanitarian group’s staff and volunteers have received threats by letter and telephone. Along with other groups, the organization has appeared on blacklists believed to be circulated by GAM to village heads and other local officials in a number of districts together with instructions forbidding them from accepting assistance from these organizations.

GAM is also reported to be responsible for widespread destruction of government buildings, including schools, and has pressured government employees to stay away from work so that large parts of the government administration are no longer functioning. Extortion is reported to be carried out by the group on a wide scale and is backed up by threats and intimidation.

The “humanitarian pause” is regarded by some observers as having provided GAM with an opportunity to regroup. Recruitment activity, including recruitment of children, is said by some observers to have intensified since the implementation of the accord. GAM is also said to be extending its influence at village-level and in some areas has taken over local government functions, including the administration of justice.

**Conclusion**

Despite encouraging indications that Indonesia’s new administration under President Megawati will continue with the reform process, the human rights situation in the country remains fragile. In the absence of fundamental institutional and legal reforms, human rights violations continue to go unpunished and perpetrators continue to evade justice.

Amnesty International (AI) calls on both the Indonesian government and GAM to end the violence against civilians and to take measures to prevent further human rights violations and to ensure the protection of human rights defenders and other activists in Aceh.

(This report, by Aliran member Andrew Aeria, is an edited summary of currently available information from Amnesty International describing the Human Rights situation in Aceh, Indonesia. Further information is available from the Amnesty International website: www.amnesty.org.

**Sources:**

a) AI News, January 2001, Vol.31, No.1
b) AI Report: INDONESIA, Activists at Risk in Aceh, November 2000
“Liberty of thought means liberty to communicate one’s thought.”

Salvador de Madariage
1886 - 1973
Spanish diplomat, writer, critic

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Few doubt that he will probably win if he were to defend Asajaya, because of the array of inducements available to him; but, there is nevertheless a risk. Abang Abu Bakar, who has declared his intention to challenge Taib in Asajaya, poses a credible challenge in a constituency where much development has also led to significant dissatisfaction, not to mention a huge block of postal voters considerably influenced by political developments in the peninsula.

This personal risk to Taib has now been resolved with his re-location to the Melanau-majority seat of Balingian. Coupled with widespread gossip that state minister and current PBB deputy president Abang Johari may be re-located to Asajaya, this shuffle may yet turn out to be a master stroke by which Taib achieves several objectives: (a) secure a very comfortable, probably uncontested, win; (b) deal a blow to Abang Abu Bakar, the enemy without, and to Abang Johari, the perceived enemy within, and (c) potentially throw Malay politics in the Kuching area, the heart of Malay dissatisfaction with Taib, off-balance.

One of the consequences of the extended speculation over Taib’s re-location to another seat is worth mentioning as illustrative of the character of the present regime. Many months ago, an article appeared in the Utusan Sarawak on this matter. It was actually laudatory of Taib, asserting that he really had nothing to fear in Asajaya. Yet, because it was printed without permission from the journalist and the editor responsible for the appearance of the piece were removed within 24 hours!

Anyway, these various uncertainties, some now partly resolved, have delayed the election. There have been at least a couple of aborted attempts earlier this year, but it is now almost certain that the election will be called very shortly after the culmination of this year’s Merdeka celebrations in Sibu on 16 September, the first time that Merdeka celebrations will extend to the actual Malaysia Day. The clearest sign: all civil service leave has now been frozen.

**Matters That Rankle**

What are the sources of these uncertainties, given that Sarawak is not the Peninsula — an obvious enough fact?

Not so obvious, however, is that Sarawak has been infected by the climate of dissent that has enveloped the country if not to the same degree as the Peninsula.

Equally, Sarawak is feeling the consequences of the break-neck pace of growth of the 1990s, many of which now come home to roost in a number of ways.

Added to this are some issues of the Sarawak BN government’s own making, indeed of the Chief Minister’s own making within PBB.

Let us look at these three inter-related matters.

Sarawakians are very state nationalist and state-centric, usually perceiving matters in the Peninsula as somewhat distant and of secondary concern.

Yet, the widespread outpouring of dissatisfaction with the federal government and the national BN has its resonances and parallels in Sarawak. The charges of corruption, cronyism and nepotism, the lack of transparency and accountability, the abuse of power, the sense of unfreedom and the length of time the leader has been in office, more arrogant by the year — all these have uncomfortably close parallels in Sarawak.

True or not, popular opinion has long held that corruption, cronyism and nepotism are a way of life in Sarawak, that transparency is something that applies to the material used for overhead projectors or the glass ladder in the new state library, and that one speaks one’s mind at great personal risk. All this is best encapsulated by a widespread gloss on the acronym of a major Sarawak KLSE-listed company, Cahaya Mata Sarawak (CMS), as Chief Minister & Sons, and the stories that abound of alleged self-aggrandisement on the part of those entrusted as leaders, from the top to the bottom levels of society.

Nevertheless, these matters are, in themselves, unlikely to make much of an impact on the Sarawak election. There is a widespread sense of an absence of an alternative, hence the hope — incomprehensible in the current Peninsular context — in some quarters of bringing UMNO to Sarawak as a check on the local parties and, in particular, of the current chief min-
ister. There is a widespread cynicism and an acceptance that politics is corrupt; hence that elections are that once-in-five-years festival when ordinary people get to share in that corruption. Finally, there is a widespread sense that one cannot afford not to vote for the ruling party, as it would otherwise mean being cut off from badly needed infrastructure development and minor projects.

Against such a backdrop, even sympathy for Anwar Ibrahim’s plight — and there’s actually quite a bit of sympathy — can be turned into fear: fear of the consequences should one align with the opposition, a fear that serves as an ironic validation of the sentiment voiced by Anwar Ibrahim when he said, “If this can happen to the No. 2 man in the country...”

Thus, a broad sense of malaise can hardly be expected to translate into active votes for the opposition. It would need more pressing and immediate local issues to do so and it would need local voices and candidates of sufficient standing and credibility to articulate them.

That was the case when Parti Banas Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) was in opposition and able to galvanise a broad spectrum of Dayak, particularly Iban, opinion into action and votes between 1987 and 1994; even then, they found it difficult to translate those votes into seats.

It was the case in the impossibly vast but sparsely populated constituency of Telang Usan in 1996, when a former PBB notable, standing as an independent, defeated his PBB opponent because of the latter’s well-known defects which offended local sensibility.

So also was it the case in the other impossibly vast and sparsely populated constituency of Belaga, location of the Bakun Dam, where, in 1996, the PBDS candidate, standing under the BN banner, won with less than half the votes against a slate of four other candidates, reflecting the widespread but inchoate sense of unhappiness with the developments of that time.

So, are there pressing and immediate local issues this time around? The brief answer is ‘yes’. The full answer is a bit more complex.

The break-neck pace of growth and the sources of that growth have had contradictory consequences, generating at the same time much wealth and income, and a sense of disenfranchisement and loss as relative, and perceived, income inequality and material standard of life have widened between urban and rural and between rich and poor. This has intersected with government policy as well as some self-inflicted wounds in the manner of government implementation of policy.

Perhaps paradoxically for outsiders, given the widespread publicity it generated at its height, it is the relative decline of the timber, more specifically logging, industry that has had most impact on this score. Perhaps even more paradoxically, it has also been the return of the PBDS to the BN fold that has been at the heart of policies and implementation that have resulted in widespread consternation.

Land

Take the latter first. The return of the PBDS to the BN fold in the mid-1990s enabled the revival of land development policies for native customary rights (NCR) land.

Originally mooted in the mid-1980s, the idea had been shelved for fear that it would provide PBDS with a major rallying point, given the centrality of land and land rights to native society.

On its revival, the policy, billed as a new concept of NCR land development, took the form of private sector, rather than state-sponsored, land development. NCR land was to be leased for a 60-year term to a joint-venture private company in which the land owners would have a 30% interest, acquired with 60% of ex gratia payments for the land; this entitled them to 30% of the dividends, when declared. This is a far cry from the admittedly poorly managed state-sponsored land development schemes in which land owners retain full interest in their land and enjoy the full proceeds, less costs, similar to a FELDA or FELCRA development.

More immediately, besides concerns over sufficiency of land left over for their own activities, many natives balked at the idea of a 60-year lease on land that was not individually titled; they feared that it would eventually result in outright loss of land as current lessors were unlikely to survive the duration of the lease. These fears were further heightened by last year’s amendments to the land code which, while promising titling of native customary land, also suggested the possibility of a significant contraction of the area falling under the category...
of such land — the culmination of more than a century of conflict between state/government and native views of land and land rights, with the former attempting to progressively restrict the coverage to land under actual cultivation, and the latter insisting on retaining rights to a territory including forest and rivers.

These amendments to the land code were the proximate cause of a conflict within the PBDS, leading to the challenge of a faction led by former PBDS deputy president, Daniel Tajem, who was appointed High Commissioner to New Zealand when PBDS rejoined the BN. The challenge resulted in the latter’s election as PBDS deputy president, in a contest with James Masing. It was a bruising contest in which the main issue was the alleged failure of James Masing to represent Dayak interests with respect to the land code amendments.

Thus, land and the fate of native rights to land is a major local issue with deep resonance across the state. Natives received a major boost for their stand on land rights when the High Court of Borneo delivered a landmark decision this year affirming their view of the matter. This was a case which pitted some natives against Borneo Pulp and Paper (BPP), a private company with significant state interests, and the Government of Sarawak. The State Attorney-General’s office attempted to deny that native customary rights pre-dated state legislation. BPP had been awarded a land lease over an area which natives insisted included their customary land. This lease covers half the district of Tatau and, if fully realised, will extend over some half a million hectares, considerably larger than the currently gazetted totally protected area.

At the same time, 5 natives are defending themselves against charges carrying mandatory death sentences. The case arose out of a fatal land dispute between their longhouse and Sarawak Oil Palm, a joint-venture between Shinyang, a predominantly timber concern, and the state government.

On top of this, current resettlement practice, as in the cases of the Bakun Dam and Borneo Pulp and Paper, is to provide only 3 acres (1.25 ha) of farmland per household. It is generally agreed that such a farm size cannot provide a decent standard of living and will condemn these households to poverty, unless they are able to obtain other employment.

In certain contexts, the land issue takes a different cast. For example, in and around the Kuching area, there are many who have long resided on land technically owned by the state. Several of these areas, mostly Malay, were ear-marked for redevelopment, with the residents to be resettled in low-cost housing projects elsewhere. In Sarawak, urban low-cost housing is priced at RM40,000, while other house prices which were extremely stable for a long time have sky-rocketed in the 1990s outstripping income growth. The proposed resettlement generated much resistance which, together with other matters, resulted in several close calls in the 1999 general election. As a result, the government has started issuing titles, and this will definitely be used as a means of inducement in the coming state election.

At the same time, those with information have bought up land in the path of urban expansion, or in areas slated for development, before such information becomes generally known. Many are politicians or perceived as those with the right connections. The value of such land has sky-rocketed shortly after purchase. This has been one of the issues in the Samarahan area where land, purchased for as little as RM5,000 an acre is now worth RM200,000.

**Jobs**

The relative decline of timber has meant a constriction of relatively well-paying jobs for people with little education. There has been and continues to be unhappiness, sometimes spilling over into direct action, over logging. But the ability of the logging industry to provide largesse to local leaders and relatively well-paying employment to others, as well as the opening up of logging roads thus making transport cheaper, underlies the deep ambiguity of Dayaks to it.

Downstream processing, much of it now facing intense price competition, has never paid as well. Indeed, rates of pay at around RM12 a day, even less, mean poverty rates for local people. Thus, it is no surprise that some 70% of the labour force in the timber processing industry in, for example, Bintulu is Indonesian. Employment in other factory work is also low-paying.

Plantations also mean poorly paid employment, suitable only as additional employment and not as a main income source. Thus, again, the presence of much foreign labour.

The reluctance of locals to engage
in such low-paying work is then attributed to their ‘laziness’, their resistance to having their land incorporated into estates to their ‘bad attitudes’.

**Self-inflicted Wounds Of Autocracy**

Finally, the self-inflicted wounds resulting from the autocratic character of the chief minister.

The main festering wound resulted from the contest for one of the deputy presidencies of PBB in 1997. Abang Johari, from an old established Malay family in Kuching, and then Minister of Industrial Development, stood for the seat, with support from Malays and Dayaks, and out-going deputy president Abang Abu Bakar. Although he sought and obtained permission from President and Chief Minister Taib, it was an open secret that the latter favoured another, Adenan Satem. In the event, Abang Johari handily defeated Adenan Satem, at which point, a senior vice president post was created and the latter appointed to it.

Persons associated with Abang Johari or seen as having had a hand in his victory were blacklisted, their businesses discriminated against. Abang Johari himself was moved from industrial development to tourism, seen as a more junior post. Even long-standing Dayak loyalists such as Leonard Linggi and Celestine Ujang were sidelined.

The main consequence of this has been to further sharpen long-standing Malay dissatisfaction, particularly in Kuching, with the present leadership. Circumscribed in their ability, and courage, to challenge the present leadership, some look to UMNO as a possible instrument to press that challenge.

Ironically, in the re-delineation exercise prior to the 1996 election, assumptions of voter loyalty and disloyalty resulted in a re-delineation that created a greater number of Malay majority seats. It also led to a constituency size voter ratios that cannot be justified by considerations of rural weightage or physical size of the constituency. For example, in Kuching, Padungan has twice the number of voters of Satok; Satok is just 3 km from Padungan!

Thus, as in the Peninsula, the chickens have apparently come home to roost.

**“Developmentalist” card**

It is these inter-twining strands of discontent that will determine voter behaviour in the coming state election, over and above whatever influence the splashing around of money and material inducements will have.

Together, these multiple strands have created enough uncertainty that, sources say, has resulted in stymying the ability of the official intelligence apparatus to read the leanings of voters. Hence the delay in holding this election until virtually the last possible moment, this side of the law.

Yet, the ruling party has one extremely strong card to play. That card is the ideology of ‘developmentalism’, the role of government in that and the need to be on the side of government, or rather the incumbent ruling party, to have access to such development. This is a complex issue, but briefly it is one that has successfully been used to disempower the people, thus turning elections into an instrument of domination, rather than one which the people use to effect their will.

Until and unless this ideology of “developmentalism” is broken, it will remain the case that despite all the grievances, the majority of the electorate will continue to undi perintah, the only ruling party they have ever known and one which has so successfully blurred the lines between party and government.

My call is to watch out for the Malay majority seats in and around Kuching and in the Sri Aman-Sibu area; but even then, I would watch the popular votes, although a few seats may well be won by the opposition, if they have the right candidates.

Limbang and Pelagus will also be well-worth watching for, in addition to the panoply of issues above, these two seats will see fathers attempting to give their sons a leg-up. In Limbang, long-standing SNAP President James Wong is seeking to propel his son, Richard, into public office, against the wishes of local BN component parties; in Pelagus, PBDS financier, incumbent S’ng Chee Hua, is seeking to get his son, 22-year old Larry, elected, also against much local rumbling.

Elsewhere, keep an eye on the popular vote, although the Chinese majority seats, with the possible exception of Padungan (in Kuching), are likely to go with the Sarawak United Peoples Party (SUPP).
he outcome of the com-
ing Sarawak state elec-
tion is in little doubt. The
state Barisan Nasional
will win at least two-thirds of the
seats; indeed, it might even make
a clean sweep of them.

What is in doubt, however, is the
performance of the state BN in
terms of popular votes. If the op-
position collectively takes close to
40% of the popular vote, it would
be cause for much celebration and
breast-beating.

Thus, the election will be caref-
fully watched, not least by the Barisan
Nasional (BN) itself. For the BN,
despite a brave front, has quietly
admitted that there are numerous
uncertainties in the coming elec-
tion. Some reports suggest that BN
has gone so far as to rate one-third
of the constituencies as ‘grey ar-
eas’! This is highly unlikely and
probably represents an attempt to
lull their opponents.

It will be watched for signs of a
translation of passive dissension
into active voting or a shift in voter
sentiment. It will also be a test of
the opposition’s ability to capital-
ise on local issues and local
resonances of national issues to
gain a substantial proportion of
the votes and even a few seats.

It will, if former federal minis-
ter and Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu
(PBB) deputy president Abang
Abu Bakar’s so-called independent
slate of candidates is to be be-
lieved, also be closely watched by
UMNO for clues as to whether it
should make the move into
Sarawak.

Not least, it will be monitored by
various factions of PBB, the lead-
ing component of the state BN,
and of Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak
(PBDS) for signs of a
slackening of the grip of PBB Presi-
dent Taib Mahmud, chief minis-
ter for the past 21 years, and hence
the possibility of an overt chal-
lenge to him.

Should the Taib-led BN lose more
than two seats in Malay majority
constituencies, it will be seen as
the beginning of the end of Taib’s
seemingly unassailable position.
Should it lose five seats or more, it
will likely seal his fate.

**Taib’s uncertainty**

Added to the above has been the
uncertainty over Chief Minister
Taib Mahmud’s own constituency
of Asajaya. This arose out of his
performance in the 1999 general
election in the parliamentary con-
stituency of Samarahan which
comprises the state constituencies
of Asajaya and Muara Tuang. While
he won handily in Muara
Tuang, his performance in
Asajaya was somewhat lack-lus-
tre.