

Dear Patron,

Re: Friends of Barisan National UK

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak has been widely criticised in his own country for his "spending binges" [1], including using taxpayer-funded trips for his personal benefit and the benefit of his own political party.

There have been numerous, blatant abuses that have caused increasing disgust in the country, which has now risen almost to the very top of the world corruption league [2].

Last June, for example, he spent over a million ringgit, or £217, 000 [3] of public money transporting family and friends on an "official visit" to Kazakhstan, where they were put up in style in order to attend a lavish wedding party for his daughter and the nephew of the President of that country.

A month later, Najib utilised a state-funded visit to the UK to set up an organization befriending his own political coalition party, Barisan National (BN), of which you became associated with.

This week, he has again invited you to a follow up event, to be held on the same day that he will be spending large sums of Malaysia's public money to transport thousands of students from all over the UK to attend as cheerleaders for a PR event starring himself at the O2 Arena.

The party BN, of which you may have now registered as a friend, has kept rigid control of Malaysia since independence, mainly by a process of increasingly blatant gerrymandering, bribery and election rigging. It was these matters that brought at least 100,000 people out onto the streets of KL last weekend in protest, demanding 'clean' elections. [Damning footage](#) has even been recorded showing Najib personally bribing voters [4].

The UK friends of BN, of which you are a member, clearly also confuses party politics with inter-country relations and trade in an equally inappropriate manner. In its stated aims [<http://m.friendsofbn.org.uk/our-objectives.php>] it reveals that:

"Through the FBN UK, members have the opportunity to develop valuable business contacts within the British Malaysian community and to exchange ideas and information with a cross section of business, trade and governmental interests.

FBN UK shall act as Malaysia's and UK's leading organisation helping both Malaysian and British companies grow and develop their business in both Malaysia and UK."

Surely such objectives and activities should be kept well away from the party political arena? Surely the Prime Minister of Malaysia should be seeking to boost trading opportunities with the UK for all the people of his country on a level playing field and not seeking to promote it through his political party and crony businessmen?

Apart from Malaysia's notorious political corruption we list some further issues that should concern anyone seeking to associate themselves with BN:

Abuse of human rights in Malaysia by BN

We question how, as a prominent member of British public life, you considered it right and proper to become associated with such an organization as BN, when just last week ordinary members of the Malaysian public were gassed and bludgeoned to the ground in their own streets for daring to call for honest government?

Censorship in Malaysia by BN

We ask you also how you can continue to befriend the same organization, when this very week the BBC and Al Jazeera have been forced to launch urgent enquiries [5] into the discovery that their news bulletins have been recently censored by the party, before being allowed to air in Malaysia?

Media manipulation and criminal defamation by BN

We also ask you to consider your support for BN in the week it has been revealed that an Australian senator, Nick Xenophon, who dared to speak up against the gassing of peaceful demonstrators found that the party had secretly organized to defame him in the Malaysian media in the most dangerous and criminal manner?

BN's media outlets, including the New Straits Times, owned by UMNO, deliberately misquoted a parliamentary speech in which Xenophon had called Scientologists "a criminal organisation instead of a religion".

For the word Scientologist the BN media manipulators substituted the word "Islam" and distributed the defamation through several publications. Such an action was tantamount to putting a price on the head of a foreign observer and constitutes the worst form of incitement to violence.

Trade and BN

Since the primary objective of *Friends of BN* is to boost trade, you might wish to consider the worrying pattern of corruption associated with major trade deals between Malaysia and other countries, of the sort that FBN UK is presumably seeking to promote.

The French courts are currently examining the scandal over the sale of 3 French submarines to Malaysia, during the period that Najib Razak was Defense Minister. It has now been revealed that it was ordered by Razak's department that all negotiations on this submarine deal were to go through one Razak Baginda, a freelance businessman with close personal ties to Najib Razak himself. Baginda set up a company (Perimaker) that was then paid RM500million (£101 million) [6] in commission by the Malaysian Government as part of the deal for the submarines, for 'facilitating' activities that have proved hard to quantify.

Britain's own trading history with Malaysia is no less plagued with lessons about dealing with representatives of the political party BN. The 1994 Pergau Dam scandal also occurred while Najib was Defense Minister (he was of course the son of Malaysia's 2nd Prime Minister). The Scott enquiry found the British Government, represented by Defense Minister Tom King, guilty of providing £234 million in "aid" to finance the controversial dam project as a sweetener to encourage a subsequent arms deal [7].

Given these human rights and corruption issues associated with BN, which anyone acquainted with Malaysia should be familiar with, we request that you justify your decision to become a patron of Friends of BN UK immediately, or trust that, alerted to the situation, you will now withdraw from this organization.

Yours sincerely,
Clare Rewcastle
Sarawak Report

References:

- [1] Bloomberg, '[Najib Spending Could Risk Downgrade Without Revenue Boost](#)', 26 April 2012
- [2] The Global Financial Integrity report 2012, *Illicit Financial Flows from Developing Countries: 2000-2009*, details £291 billion of illicit flows from Malaysia over an 8-year period.
- [3] Malaysiakini, '[PM's trip to Kazakhstan cost over RM1mil](#)', 11 October 2011
- [4] Youtube, [Najib: You help me, I help you](#)
- [5] Independent, '[BBC to investigate news censorship claims](#)', 3 May 2012
- [6] Malaysiakini, '[Another Najib Buddy tied to Scorpene scandal](#)', 2 June 2011
- [7] World Development Movement, [Tied Aid and Development: Pergau Dam](#)