



MALAYSIAN SOCIETY FOR TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY

TRANSPARENCY

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam

I hope our members and friends have had a very happy and prosperous New Year, Ponggal, Chinese New Year and Awal Muharam. The ushering in of 2008 is expected to be momentous as it is predicted to be a general election year, namely the 12th general election. As for TIM, the first quarter of 2008 has been very significant as a whole. We launched many new and critical projects such as Crinis (Political Funding and Political Corruption), Forestry Advocacy Programme and Judicial Integrity Survey.

The election fever caught all of us and we kick started the TI Berlin-ried Crinis project which studies political financing (during election and non-election year) and electoral transparency by organizing a workshop on "Free, Fair and Transparent Elections: the Way Forward" on 24th January 2008. The half day workshop was very well attended and received good response from members of the media. Our speakers consisted of well regarded activists and journalists such as Malik Hussein (MAFREL), Dr Zulkifli Ahmad (PAS Research Centre advisor), Wong Chin Huat (an academic whose interest is in electoral studies), Gayathry Venketiswaran (Centre for Independent Journalism) and Dzulkifli Asmawi (Citizens Think Tank). The speakers provided critical overview and insights on the Independence of the Election Commission, Media Freedom, Proportional Representation and Fair Elections in Malaysia, Election and Democratic Process in Malaysia and Election observation of the 12th General Elections.

The topics attracted a lively debate and a vibrant exchange of comments and remarks from members of the floor. Participants included well known academicians, political party representatives, members of the media, social and political activists, thinkers and members of the public.

When Parliament was dissolved on 13th February and nomination of candidates

announced a week later, TIM decided to embark on print and TV advertisement monitoring campaign. As part of the Transparency International's regional CRINIS (Ray of Light) Project to promote transparency in political financing, Transparency International Malaysia monitored six English dailies, five Malay newspapers, four Chinese dailies and three Tamil dailies since Nomination Day. Estimated advertisement expenditure was based on normal advertisement rates quoted by the various publications surveyed.

We monitored an average 18 dailies everyday. In the first twelve days of the period under monitor i.e. Feb 25-March 07, Barisan Nasional (BN) was projected to have spent a cumulative total of RM7.285 million. According to the Election Offences Act 1954, a parliamentary candidate can spend only up to RM 200,000 while a state candidate, only RM 100,000 in total election campaign expenditure. This means BN's 222 parliamentary candidates and 504 state candidates can collectively spend up to only RM 94.8 million. Of this 94.8 million, 7.68% had been spent on print media advertisements thus far, after nomination date.

The 97 parliamentary candidates and 174 state candidates from Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) are collectively allowed to spend up to RM 36.8 million. There were some advertisements by PKR that collectively added up to RM25,000 or 0.07% of the total projected allowable election expenditure for their candidates. With 47 parliamentary candidates and 101 state candidates, Democratic Action Party (DAP) may spend up to RM 19.5 million but the few advertisements that were recorded added up to total costs of RM111,000 or 0.57% of the total projected allowable election expenditure for their candidates. None of Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS)'s 66 parliamentary candidates and 235 state candidates had so far, spent anything on print media advertisement although their candidates total projected allowable election expenditure adds up to RM 36.7 million.

We believe that there can be no level playing field if all parties do not have fair access to the media. We hope to see a change in the electronic media which is, hitherto entirely monopolized by the dominant parties.

TIM has been urging all parties to declare all their advertisement expenses and to require their candidates to report their respective share of such expenses. TI also urges the

Election Commission to closely scrutinize the candidates' expenses report and be prepared to lodge police reports for any under-reporting found. We also organized a workshop called "Towards Further Improving Malaysia's Forestry Management: Good Governance and Best Practices in the Forestry Sector". It was held at the Shah's Village Hotel, PJ on 24th and 25th March and was attended by more than 70 delegates. Our forest management workshop encompassed the administrative, legal, technical, economic, social and environmental aspects related to the use and exploitation of this valuable resource. It discussed issues related to monitoring, accountability and transparency, and incentives for improved forest management as well as disincentives and an enabling environment for efficient forestry management. Achieving good governance dominated our workshop agenda. There were overseas speakers from Berlin, Indonesia and Thailand as well as local speakers who represented the Forestry Department, Forest Research Institute of Malaysia, UNDP, UITM, EU delegation, and Indigenous Groups.

The outcome of the workshop clearly indicated that better governance and increased transparency is needed to promote efficient forestry governance. To that effect, TIM is currently holding discussion with UNDP and Traffic Southeast Asia to collaborate on forest related issues and how to stamp out corruption and achieve good governance in the forestry sector.

Other projects in the pipeline include our occasional talk and the first one for 2008 will be held on 24th April. Yang Mulia Tunku Abdul Aziz Ibrahim will deliver a talk on "Some Reflections of Malaysia Reality. We are also planning to hold a workshop on Freedom of Information and an Anti Conference Summit towards later part of the year as well as adhoc events related to current issues.

We hope our projects and events get continuous support from our members, members of the media and friends in our ongoing efforts to eliminate corruption and promote integrity and accountability in all sectors.

We also hope you will enjoy this first issue of 2008 and gives us continuous feedback on how to make our newsletter more informative and instructive. Happy reading!

Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam
President
Transparency International Malaysia



Transparency In Motion



By Chin Yaong Kheong, Exco Member of TI Malaysia
11th April 2008

The recent General Election has highlighted the importance of the very core value of transparency that the society has seen deteriorating over the years. As the country progresses, our value system has changed. A child grows to learn from the parents. The citizens learn from the leadership and the leadership is guided by the value system of the organization in which he belongs to. Over time, the value system of an organization takes its own life based on the aggregate of personal values of the people that makes up the organization. You can try to shape an embedded value system which has been shaped by the culture built over the years. Often, the organization is larger than the individual and it is the individual that will be shaped by the organization rather than the contrary. However, if the leader is selfless and benevolent, he can change the organization for the better over time with well executed strategic initiatives.

Transparency is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end. Transparency without accountability will only give rise to great discontentment. Exposure of a wrong doing does not solve the problem; neither does it stop the problem. In some cases, knowing that the perpetrator is not brought to book, the perpetrator becomes bolder. Good governance will have an embedded process of accountability in the event of transgression from good practice. The perpetrator is brought to be accountable for his actions or inaction.

Have you tried to build a house on your own land in KL recently? After a long period of waiting for your application to be processed, one may be asked by the approving officer to engage a "container" contractor to dispose of the construction debris from a pre-determined list of contractors. This request is made whilst your application for building approval is being processed. Additionally, you are requested to make a deposit to engage this contractor. Understandably, the authorities can define the conditions to be observed but

it is disheartening to note that one has to pre-engage a "contractor" from their list. Surely, there is still a long period more before construction can commence.

Furthermore, in an open enterprise system, one should engage a competent contractor from the open market. On the pretext that the list is part of the workings of the NEP ("New Economic Policy"), surely the NEP is meant to benefit all Bumiputras and the poor and not just those listed.

Moving on, there is the recent case of the RM4.6 billion Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) project, which is shrouded in controversy over the cost of the project. This project has gone through two previous Ministers and the current Minister, YB Datuk Ong Tee Keat has promised a full report over the controversy, paving the way for transparency to work its course. We shall wait in earnest to see the development of this controversy as the event unfolds.

The society has a stake in all public projects by virtue that they are the taxpayers. Public funds are scarce and fundamental economics dictate that scarce resources must be allocated efficiently. If not, the projects will not benefit the people as much as it should. Oligarchic capitalism where power and money are concentrated within a privileged group is unhealthy. The wealth amassed will lead to great disparity of income levels in the economy and the income will not necessarily regenerate in the domestic economy. Eventually, the system will distort the allocation of scarce resources, making the economy grow more slowly, if at all.

Given that transparency can help to grow the economy for the benefit all, how do we get to practice transparency with dignity? First, we need sincerity in openness to engage the stakeholders. In public policy setting, the stakeholders are wide and far reaching. When the views of stakeholders are taken into account, a decision can be taken mindful of the impact on the stakeholders and not merely for the benefit of a selected few. The proliferation of the internet and SMS as an alternative media has brought down the wall of selective communication that was a stronghold of those in power. The internet has brought a new challenge to openness. Stories spread; but not facts. Stories can sensationalize the mystery of the unknown. It is therefore now more important than ever before for the ruling government of the day to be open and transparent with the facts to curb the spread of stories. Those in power must do the right things and must be perceived not to do the wrong things. Secondly, conducting affairs in a transparent

manner with a structured disclosure regime augurs well with a dignified follow-through from openness in engaging the stakeholders in the first place. The impact on the interest of the respective stakeholders must be well communicated with mutual understanding of the relative impact of one stakeholder to the other. There is no room for covert management. Leaders who regard wealth and power as an end will breed corruption and destroy the fabric of transparency. Thirdly, wrong doers are made accountable with a well defined system of accountability. The law of the land is as effective as the manner in which prosecution is executed. Perpetrators must be taken to task and made accountable irrespective of the standing of that person. If an individual can be jailed for not carrying his identity card, a Member of Parliament cannot escape for flouting Custom laws or a State Assemblyman cannot escape for defying State building laws. When someone blows the cover, do not shoot the messenger.

We need to recognize that it takes time to change. The opposition parties have been highly critical of the ruling government. They are now in power in five States and we trust they will impart their beliefs that they have been fighting hard for and do not get moulded by the existing system that they have found shortcoming. When you are in the opposition, you hold a hammer ready to hit at any perceived wrong doing. When you hold a hammer, everything looks like a nail. Now that the hammer is down, the nails may not be all there. Some may be mushrooms of growth. Leaders have to be wise in choosing the path of governance. Have a sincere heart and a noble mind.

The current political situation has given light to a new dimension of transparency, which will benefit the country in the medium and long term. To have sustainable transparency in motion, you need a strong check and balance. We have seen a meek check and balance tends to be steam-rolled. Between an environment with opaque governance and transparent governance with strong check and balance, the latter is preferred although we may have to live with constructive disruption. Any organization cannot afford to have leaders with split personalities of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Openness, transparency and accountability are the core ingredients of progress. As mentioned in the Fitch Ratings report on Malaysia, it has been recognized that the administration is more tolerant of public criticism, which is conducive to continual gradual reforms. Hopefully, that has paved the pathway for transparency in motion!



HIGHLIGHTS

TIM 10th Annual General Meeting

The 10th AGM of the Malaysian Society for Transparency & Integrity (MSTI) The Malaysian Chapter of TI was held on 25th March 2008 at Menara Integriti courtesy of IIM. It was chaired by the President, Tan Sri Navaratnam. 29 ordinary and corporate members attended the meeting which saw the completion of the annual business matters prescribed by the Registrar of Societies and MSTI's constitution. The meeting saw a lively discussion of issues pertaining to the work of MSTI as an anti-corruption NGO. All matters on the agenda were attended to except the proposed amendments to the constitution which the meeting decided to defer to a later date.

Free, Fair and Transparent Elections in Malaysia - January 24th 2008

On 24th January 2008, TI M organised a half day workshop titled "Free, Fair and Transparent Elections in Malaysia: The Way Forward". It attracted more than 50 participants from the civil society groups, academics, political party members and interested individuals. The presentations focused on independence of the election commission, election observation of 12th Malaysian General Elections, Elections and Democratic Process in Malaysia, Access to Information and Elections and First Past the Post and creating level playing fields. A vibrant question and answer sessions followed the presentations. TI M organized a one and



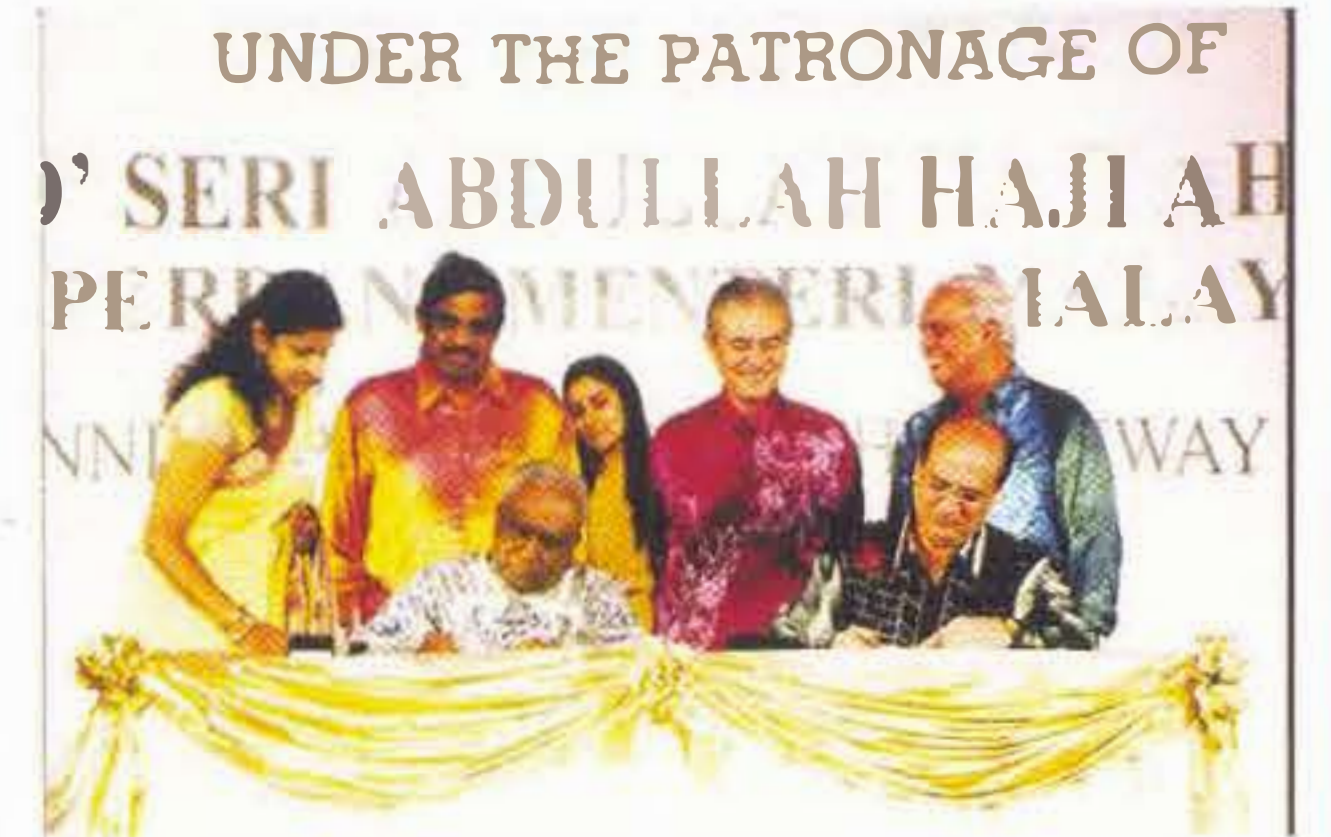
half day workshop titled: Towards Further Improving Malaysia's Forestry Management: Good Governance and Best Practices in the Forestry Sector on 24 and 25th March. The objective of the workshop was to :

- discuss the existing practices related to forestry management in the region in particular good governance, accountability and transparency in the forestry sector.
- examine the key elements and application of good governance ideas, including transparent and equitable relationships between stakeholders, public accountability and participatory decision-making.
- Identify loopholes in the Malaysian forestry management and how to plug them based on good governance and best practices models.
- Develop a strategy and operational recommendations to strengthen governance.
- Analyse the types and mechanisms of good management and the role of forest policy, forest management including technological safeguards, forest law enforcement and community institutions.
- Study important issues, constraints, challenges, and opportunities for sustainable forest management (SFM).

The workshop attracted more than 70 participants with a lively exchange of comments and questions. There will be follow up activity as part of our forestry integrity programme.

MOC Signing Ceremony

TI M signed a MOC with Malaysian Associated Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industries (MAICCI) on 31st January as well as with SEDC (Sarawak Economic Development Corporation) on 14th March 2008. The aim was introduce TI M's unique Integrity Pact to promote integrity, accountability and to combat corruption in a move to reinforce existing framework within the organization. The MOC would ensure integrity and transparency in the award of contracts and tenders.



MAICCI- TIM (Signing Ceremony)



MAICCI- TIM (Signing Ceremony)



MAICCI- TIM (Signing Ceremony)



SEDC- TIM (Signing Ceremony)



SEDC- TIM (Signing Ceremony)



TIM ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2007

2007 was indeed a very busy year for TIM. We launched many events and projects in addition to carrying out ongoing projects. On February 6 and 7, TIM collaborated with ASLI (Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute) and organised a forum on World Ethics and Transparency: Towards Greater Transparency for Global Competitiveness. The repeated theme was for a much stronger emphasis of good governance at the district, state, and global level in both public and private sectors. In Malaysia, the government is called to account for its actions in order to show commitment to eradicating corruption at all levels. Some of the current discourse is on introducing a "Right to Information" bill, holding of local elections, and reinstating court reviews on political parties. The impacts of corruption goes beyond social disintegration but also distorts the economic system, endangers the stability of democratic institutions, violates human rights, and hampers government service delivery to the people.

On the 5th May, the Malaysian Transparency Perception Survey was launched by YB Dato Shahrir Abdul Samad, Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. The event was attended by more than 100 guests from government and private sectors as well as senior diplomats, civil society representatives and members of the media. The survey cut across 411 corporations and 1025 individuals. The findings showed that the public perceived that "not enough is being done" by the authorities to fight corruption. There seems to be a gap between what is said and what is done on the issue of transparency especially in privatized contracts and the functioning of local authorities. But significant numbers of members of the public also remain largely trustful of government pronouncements and efforts to improve the standard of integrity and transparency despite some of their own personal experiences.

On May 24th, we launched the global corruption report: Corruption in Judicial System. The report highlighted two key judicial corruption issues which are political interference in judicial process by either the executive or legislative branches of government and bribery. It calls for the promotion of judicial independence and accountability, encourage individual integrity, effective enforcement of the law, safeguard the judiciary against political influence, judicial and prosecutorial appointments, media freedom among many other recommendations.

The Integrity Campaign for Primary School Children was launched on June 18, 2007 funded by the Swiss Embassy. The objectives of this program are to educate and create awareness amongst primary students on good values, and to enhance the Ministry of Education initiative in developing positive values in students. This education campaign targets children from the ages of 10 to 12 and will help increase the effectiveness of anti-corruption messages; especially towards the younger generation. TI-Malaysia hopes to instill and educate our young ones, Malaysia's future society with more integrity and honesty. Corruption is a contagious disease, regardless of national borders or ethnicity. Eradicating corruption is an investment in the future because in the next 30 or 40 years, economic success and political stability of Malaysia depend on the decision-making of our children.

Our Global Corruption Barometer (GCB), a public opinion survey on perception and experiences of corruption, was launched on 6th December ahead of the United Nations International Anti Corruption Day on 9th December. The TI Global Corruption Barometer 2007 was well attended by members of the media, government agencies and other organisations and individuals. The survey, found that citizens in countries across the globe continue to see political parties and parliaments as the institutions most compromised by corruption. The GCB 2007 finds that it is the poor who are most often confronted with requests for bribes, in wealthy and poor countries alike. Extortion hits low-income households with a regressive tax that saps scarce household resources.

PRESS STATEMENT BY TI MALAYSIA

Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M) Welcomes New Government Guidelines On Accountability January 2, 2008

by Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam,
President of TI-Malaysia

Transparency International Malaysia strongly supports the new guidelines introduced by the National Audit Department ("NAD") to ensure that government officials entrusted to make investments with public funds must follow new guidelines on accountability and also have the necessary credentials.

The new directive also requires that members of committees giving out government tenders should also be qualified and be present during all meetings to ensure procedures are followed before a final decision is made.

The introduction of an Accountability Index ratings system for government ministries, government agencies and statutory bodies, local authorities etc. is a step in the right direction. We are also encouraged that the Auditor-General, Tan Sri Ambrin Buang and the NAD are pushing for suitably qualified and experienced employees are appointed to important positions and for proper succession plans to ensure no disruption in public services.

The proposal to correlate promotion of secretaries-general and department heads to their respective financial performance index will help ensure accountability in the stewardship of public funds and bring comfort to our tax payers.

Amongst others, the guidelines requires that department heads make surprise checks to ensure proper management and utilisation of funds and timely and transparent quarterly reports by financial management committees and development committees.

We especially welcome the requirement that government assets should be kept and maintained on schedule and used strictly only for are official work is very timely.

The issuance of this new directive is a clear sign that the Auditor-General is serious about checking corruption and abuse of public funds and public assets and is in line with the Prime Minister and the Chief Secretary's publicly stated goal of improving the delivery system, under PEMUDAH.

TI-Malaysia also urges PEMUDAH to take heed of this latest directive and help monitor compliance with it amongst the departments and agencies concerned.

Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M) Calls On Government To Ensure Transparency And Accountability In All Government Expenses And Procurement January 17, 2008

by Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam,
President of TI-Malaysia



Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M) welcomes Public Accounts Committee chairman Dato' Shahrir Abdul Samad's important statement that transparency and accountability are expected in all government expenses. Dato' Shahrir added that there is a system within the Government to ensure that all expenses and projects are carried out with transparency and the system requires a tender committee to be set up for every project and the committee should have some selection and decision process. He further added that such a system must be implemented and applied to all expenses and projects, whether they were carried out locally or overseas.

TI-Malaysia believes that any waste (and theft) of public funds is unacceptable and severe action must be taken against the culprits, including dismissal, prosecution and a claim for restitution.

More importantly, we ask that the administrative systems and procedures of the ministries and agencies concerned be reviewed to stop all abuses. Any such leakages will affect our economic competitiveness directly as there is less funding available for development work. Corruption is one of the major obstacles to economic progress, and its effects on development are disastrous with the poor being severely deprived of facilities and amenities that they deserved.

Obviously, in the process of implementation, government will get very poor value for its spending due to corrupt practices and abuses arising from the non adherence to sound rules and regulations.

TI-M calls upon government to immediately review the system and ensure better management of public funds. This can be done through a more active monitoring machinery that can be adopted by the Auditor-General's Department on an on-going audit system, as in the private sector. Similarly, the announcement of faster payments by government for goods and services, must give adequate attention to the certification of good performance on the part of suppliers and contractors. There could be a danger that fast payments may lead to less supervision of performance, which must not be sacrificed.

There has to be a proper balance in the achievement of both objectives of speedy payments and quality performance, please. What taxpayers want is really "good value for their money", without corruption.

Watchdog Calls On Parties To Field Only Clean Candidates

February 16, 2008

The Star

KUALA LUMPUR: Parties fielding candidates for the general election should ensure that they are not corrupt, said Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M) yesterday.

President Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam also called for the removal of candidates with bad records or service, or who have been perceived as being corrupt.

In a statement stating TI-M's wishlist for the 2008 elections, Navaratnam said there should be more liberal treatment for requests for election rallies and more press coverage for opposition candidates.

He said there should be monitoring of money politics and a clampdown on campaign funding that was above the approved legal limits.

"There should be better facilitation for voting. Voters should be assisted and not given the run around by pushing them from one polling booth to another.

"The Election Commission should ensure full transparency, integrity and accountability in the election process," he added.

Election Laws Need Reform For Transparency And A Level Playing Field

February 22, 2008

Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M) calls for changes in election laws in respect of election finance and caretaker government to promote transparency and a level playing field, which are essential to free and fair elections.

As part of this effort, TI-M has initiated discussions amongst like-minded NGO's and individuals to coordinate civil societies' election monitoring efforts for the 12th General Elections.

TI-M supports the idea of a Royal Commission on Electoral Reform (RCER) to be established after the March 8 Elections. The Commission's term of reference should cover all aspects of electoral process and not confined to the existing jurisdiction of Elections Act 1958 and Election Offences Act 1954.

TI-M proposes the following changes:

1. Restriction on Caretaker Government's power.

As pointed out by constitutional law expert Prof. Shad Saleem Faruqi, by the Commonwealth tradition, the outgoing government is only the caretaker government which should refrain from making any politically controversial decisions such as making appointments or dismissals in key posts, make important policy decisions, implement new laws or commit the incoming government into any major expenditure.

TI-M proposes that the functions of the Caretaker Government be stipulated in the Federal Constitution, be governed by an Administrative Neutrality Act or at least a written convention like that in Australia:

http://www.dpmc.gov.au/guidelines/docs/caretaker_conventions.rtf

2. Taking the Political Parties as Unit of Accounting in Election Finance

As admitted by EC Secretary Dato' Kamaruzaman himself, the Election Offences Act 1958 governs only expenses by candidates but not by the parties. This loophole has allowed parties to spend massively beyond the caps of RM 200,000 (parliamentary) and RM 100,000 (state) contest without getting caught.

TI-M suggests that the Act be amended so that not only candidates' finances but the parties' election finances be subject to the caps. In this election, by right, no parties should spend more than RM 94.9 million as they may, at most, contest only 222 parliamentary seats and 505 state seats.

However, some parties' advertising expenses alone may exceed this figure. Knowing the loophole, the EC should proposed a change to the law or remove all caps subject to strict reporting requirements.

3. Enforcing Reporting of All Contributions to Election Campaign

Under present practice, most candidates do not report the contributions they receive in kind and in labour and many of them under-report even monetary contribution. This prevents the public and media from knowing who bought influence and by how much.



Good governance is therefore threatened because elected representatives may return the favours to their sponsors after elections, resulting in bad policies and inefficient allocation of resources.

To ensure that the candidates report honestly, TI-M proposes that the certain caps of contributions be formulated and heavy penalties prescribed for non-reporting and / or under-reporting. To curb money politics, caps may instead be placed on the contributors, limiting what wealthy individuals/groups can contribute to a single candidate and to all candidates. Alternatively, we might accept a system of having no caps but subject to strict reporting requirements.

4. Introducing Public Financing of Election Campaign

Since modern electioneering is indisputably essential to democracy but also inevitably expensive, TI-M proposes that the governments – at both federal and state levels – allocate a reasonable funding to subsidize political parties and candidates. Such practices are found in many European, American and even Asian countries.

Forcing the contestants to depend solely on private funding incur two heavy costs on the citizenry:

(a) resource-poor citizens will shy away from politics;

(b) elected representatives may return the favour of their sponsors in public decision making.

Public/State subsidy for electioneering can be allocated to various contestants in many objective formulas – one of them is through their vote shares in previous election.

TI-M believes that the four reforms listed above are vital for transparent, free and fair elections in Malaysia. They should be included in the terms of reference for the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform (RCER) called for by the civil society. TI-M is pleased to offer its input in such discussions after the elections.

Reforms in the following areas will also have positive impacts for transparent, free and fair elections:

- Equitable access to the media, print as well as electronic, for all political parties.
- Allow peaceful political rallies.
- Bar candidates with records of convictions for fraud and corruption.
- Election Commission to bring about an electoral system and process that meets the requirements of transparency, integrity and accountability that complies with best practices as recommended by international bodies including the United Nations. This includes ensuring that the principle of "one man, one vote" is adhered to as far as possible.

RM1 Million Spent In Polls Ads First 3 Days (Quoting TI-M Press Statement On Projections Of Print Media Advertisement Expenditure By Political Parties)

February 28, 2008

MalaysiaKini

The ruling Barisan Nasional coalition has spent RM1 million in print media advertising in the first three days of the election campaign, said corruption watchdog Transparency International-Malaysia.

"Ramon Navaratnam" In the first three days of the period under monitor - Feb 25 to 27 - BN was projected to have spent a cumulative total of RM1.049 million," said TI president Ramon V Navaratnam.

The amount does not include TV advertisements in which TI conceded were where the "lion's share of election advertising monies are believed to go".

However, the organisation will begin monitoring political parties' expenses for TV election advertisements beginning today.

According to Ramon, the TI study was part of a regional project to promote transparency in political financing.

Over the 13-day campaigning period, TI is monitoring election advertisements in six English dailies, five Malay newspapers,

four Chinese titles and three Tamil dailies.

Ramon said that TI's estimated advertisement cost is based on normal advertisement rates quoted by the various publications surveyed. If the cost of advertisements was to be divided proportionally among BN candidates, TI said that each parliamentary contestant would have spent RM2,220, while each state candidate, RM1,103 on print advertising alone.

Scrutinise candidates expenses, EC told Ramon argued that this cost should be reflected in the candidates' expenses where under the law a parliamentary candidate can spend only up to RM200,000 while a state candidate RM100,000, in election campaign expenditure.

This means that BN candidates have only RM197,780 (for parliament seat) and RM98,897 (state) left to spend for the remaining 10 days of the campaign period.

"TI urges all (political) parties to declare all their advertisement expenses and to require their candidates to report their respective share of such expenses," said Ramon.

"TI also urges the Election Commission to closely scrutinise the candidates' expenses report and be prepared to lodge police reports for any under-reporting found."

According to TI, there was no election advertising by opposition parties - PAS, DAP and PKR - over the first three days of the electoral campaign in the 18 monitored newspapers.

"This is the first time that campaign expense monitoring is being monitored," said Ramon, who is a former top civil servant.

"This is a new addition to election process monitoring and media content monitoring that had started from previous elections and is being performed in this election as well."

TI-M Supports The Election Commission

Mar 27, 2008

The Sun

Transparency International (TI) yesterday urged the Election Commission to check on the allegations made by Malaysia for Free and Fair Elections (MAFREL) and publicly announce the results of its quick check.



In a statement yesterday, TI (Malaysia chapter) president, Ton Sri Ramon Navaratnam said MAFREL's claim that there are voters who are registered in more than one polling booth is very serious.

On EC chairman Ton Sri Abdul Rashid Abdul Rohman's statement to Associated Press that the electoral system can become a "laughing stock" and lose its credibility because of the pro-government reporting on the dominant political parties, Navaratnam said TI supports his call for a more "level playing field" and a review of the EC laws and processes. Unfortunately, the EC's decision to cancel the use of indelible ink for this election after promising to do so, will election after promising to do so, will contribute much to this perception of the Election 2008 as a "laughing stock".

The explanation that the EC has given is for from convincing", he said pointing out that these technical and other problems could have been anticipated and addressed in time, if there was more due diligence and efficiency exercised in preparing for the elections.

"After all, this is not rocket science and we need not reinvent the wheel".

In strongly urging the EC to immediately check on the allegations made by MAFREL, he said the EC should ban and penalize the "phantom voters" urgently and before election day.

"Immediate rectification of this major EC failure would encourage Malaysian voters to take part more confidently in the elections in larger numbers, otherwise there could be more protest votes against the elections system and the candidates themselves" he said.

"Unless urgent action is taken to ensure clean and fair elections, even at this late hour, our election results may provide more "laughing stock" and less confidence and respect for the transparency and integrity of our elections 2008!

I personally know of a few cases of healthy young voters having been deleted from the electoral list by the National Registration Dept., on the grounds that they are "dead" when actually I know that they are still very much alive!

That is surely a lough although sadly traumatic for the person concerned, who has been put to a great deal of inconvenience as well as they have now become nonentities and non-persons, for the purpose of day to day banking and other transactions.

TI-M also supports Ton Sri Rashid's appeal for "some kind of a review of the election system, after 50 years of our independence indeed the election laws and regulations could in many instances be quite outdated and archaic and must be reviewed and revised soon after the elections.

TI-M thus urges the government to make this a promise to the voters, before the elections, that a Royal Commission would review the election system, as soon as possible after the elections on Saturday, March 2008.

TI-M hopes and prays that the 2008 Elections will be clean and fair and transparent, we hope that we as Malaysians will be proud of the conduct of the elections and that's it and we will not be "laughing stocks", after the elections!

Lets all vote wisely for a better Malaysia!

Start On Clean Sheet By Declaring Net Assets, Reps Urged

April 2, 2008

NST

KUALA LUMPUR: Elected representatives should declare their "net assets" from the time they win office, said Transparency International Malaysia president Ton Sri Ramon Navaratnam.

By doing so, he said, elected and appointed public officials would start on "a clean sheet".

He said the asset declaration should then be updated continuously, not just once in two years.

But he added that it may not be wise to make public the assets accumulated by the elected representatives before their election.

"There are some risks involved in public declarations, as public knowledge... can expose the individuals concerned to safety and security threats and dangers."

Navaratnam also said the public should be told when these officials and their immediate family members, including spouses, their children and their spouses, acquire new assets and liabilities.

He said the prime minister's directive to elected representatives to declare their assets publicly should also cover liabilities.

"This is important as we need to establish their 'net worth' as some can sometimes borrow much more than their assets and get away with corruption."

He urged the government to declare the Anti-Corruption Agency fully independent so as to combat corruption more effectively.

Declare and Update Assets

April 2, 2008

The Star

KUALA LUMPUR: The requirement that elected representatives declare their assets should be expanded by requiring them to update this information on a continuous basis, said Transparency International-Malaysia (TI-M).

It said that more should be done to enhance the Prime Minister's directive that Cabinet ministers, deputy ministers and their spouses declare their assets.

TI-M president Ton Sri Ramon Navaratnam said that the declaration of assets by the officials should also include liabilities as well.

He proposed that the asset declaration be updated on a continuous basis and not just once every two years.

This is so that the public could be made instantly aware when these officials and their immediate family members acquire new assets or liabilities, he added.

He acknowledged the risks involved in making public such declarations as public knowledge of a person's assets and liabilities can expose them to security threats.

Navaratnam said that if the proposals were adopted, the public officials would start on a clean slate, but that should not exempt them from investigations by the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) if they had accumulated ill-gotten gains in the past.

On the ACA, Navaratnam said the agency should be made fully independent so that it could fight corruption more effectively.

He said all relevant laws should be scrutinised and amended to combat corruption.

"A Freedom of Information Act and a Whistleblowers Protection Act should be introduced to ensure the success of the Government's moves to fight corruption," he added.



TI CHAPTER IN THE NEWS

Elizabeth Donnelly, Coordinator of the Africa Programme, Chatham House
By Mike Sidwell

Elizabeth Donnelly is coordinator of the Africa Programme at Chatham House (the Royal Institute of International Affairs) in London. Having lived and travelled extensively in Africa, she also coordinates the British All Party Parliamentary Groups on Nigeria and Angola, and has published numerous articles and reports on Nigeria. This month Transparency Watch spoke with her about the issue of corruption in Nigeria and the work of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Nigeria.

Transparency Watch (TW) : *Is corruption evident in Nigeria and what are its effects?*

Elizabeth Donnelly (ED) : I think most visitors to Nigeria come away with stories of their experience of corruption – whether it is being asked to pay an “entry fee” at the airport, or to pay to pass a police roadblock. I think the most obvious way in which corruption is evident in Nigeria is the clearly staggering wealth of a handful of people in the face of the poverty of the majority. It manifests itself in other ways also – the regular power cuts and lack of infrastructure and basic services. Billions of naira are ploughed into promised improvements on roads, power supply and so on, but the tangible changes that these promises would deliver are often very slow in coming.

The effects of corruption in Nigeria are considerable. Of course Nigeria faces great challenges to its development, but the biggest hurdle is the corruption. Nigeria is not a poor country; it is not aid dependent and has all the components necessary to be more developed and more successful. Yet an estimated 70 million Nigerians live below the poverty line. There are however even more profound effects than those physical ones such as lack of basic healthcare and education. I'm thinking here about the impact corruption and unaccountable government have on the psyche of a nation. Corruption breaks trust and destroys faith in the state, it creates cynicism and muddles expectations.

So in Nigeria corruption is in fact strengthened by the fact that people come to expect less and less from the state the more they are disappointed by it. This presents problems for Nigeria's democratic transition.

TW : *What have been the repercussions of the disputed election in April 2007 that brought President Umaru Yar'Adua to power?*

ED : The repercussions of these very

problematic elections can be seen at various levels. The president recognised from the outset that his legitimacy was greatly weakened by the flawed elections. He sought to rectify this by pledging to be a “servant-leader” and to adhere without question to the rule of law. He created the Electoral Reform Committee to see to improving Nigeria's electoral system.

At another level you have the work of the judiciary through the election tribunals, including the presidential tribunal which dismissed the opposition challenges. At the state level, the tribunals have nullified the elections of seven state governors.

For Nigerian citizens, although the elections process was tremendously disappointing and frustrating – and, for many, violent and intimidating – the work of the tribunals may go some way to restoring faith in democracy. One of the most important repercussions of the elections is the debate they have stimulated – it is an extremely positive sign of what's to come for Nigeria that there was not a violent reaction on the streets following the elections, but there has been a reaction in terms of debate, and discussion, which shows that people are willing to participate to try and build a better democracy in Nigeria.

TW : *In his inaugural speech, Yar'Adua committed himself to “zero tolerance for corruption in all its forms.” Has he lived up to this promise since assuming office in May 2007?*

ED : This is a contentious issue, tied up with how President Yar'Adua came to power, who he is and the political landscape he must negotiate. The fact that he was one of the first and few state governors to publicly declare his assets when he was governor of Katsina state and was never investigated for corruption, coupled with some of the decisions he has made since coming to power including reversal of the controversial decision made under the former president to sell two oil refineries to a consortium of businessmen, indicate that he is serious about fighting corruption.

However, in my opinion, the directive that gave more power to the Attorney General, Michael Aondoakaa, over decisions to prosecute in cases of corruption and the removal of Nuhu Ribadu from his position as Executive Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission made many in Nigeria (and beyond) nervous. The impact that the Attorney General will have on Nigeria's anti-corruption fight remains to be seen. Ribadu has been sent on a training programme, so it is possible that he will return to the EFCC. However, this is an important test for the Commission. For many Ribadu was the leader of the anti-corruption fight. However, Nigeria needs strong institutions as

much as strong individuals. It is important that the success of the EFCC is not wholly dependent on who is its chair. Mr. Ibrahim Lamorde, the acting chairman, does have his work cut out however.

Regardless of how committed President Yar'Adua is to the anti-corruption fight, he must still operate within a political framework bound up in corruption. The president has a very complex political game to play if he is to avoid being limited in clamping down on corruption.

TW : *What are the largest challenges facing Yar'Adua in his efforts to fight corruption?*

ED : His largest challenge is the system he has inherited. The politics and power relations within Nigeria are very complicated indeed. The president came to power with little legitimacy in the eyes of the people, while at the same time he will be beholden to some who made his presidency possible. As I have come to understand it, it is difficult to be in politics in Nigeria and not to be tainted by corruption. Different people, different factions, have different agendas and many have an interest in maintaining the status quo. The president's job is to learn what these are and to be able to exploit them for his own purposes – hopefully to fight corruption. This will take time for a president who was formerly little known even as Governor of Katsina state, who seen little and who does not seem to throw his weight about so readily. His mild-manner is in the mould of the servant-leader, and this may be his greatest weakness in a political environment where power, charisma and force are more respected.

TW : *According to Nigeria's 1999 constitution, the president, vice president, state governors and deputy governors have immunity from prosecution. Has this unaccountability resulted in cases of malfeasance in the past?*

ED : Most certainly – before last year's April elections 31 of the 36 state governors were being investigated, but none could be prosecuted while in office, regardless of the outcomes of the investigations. Since leaving office, there have been arrests of state governors, including former Delta State governor James Ibori, who is being investigated by the UK's Metropolitan Police [see BBC article]. In the case of former Rivers State governor Peter Odili, a court has barred the EFCC from investigating him and the state finances [see Reuters article]. The EFCC is currently appealing the court's decision. As I said earlier, Nigeria is not a poor country, yet its people remain poor. This is because many of its officials feel able to siphon off state funds and feel comfortable doing so. While there are limits to the EFCC's power and many investigations will not result in prosecutions, often for political reasons, I do



believe that attitudes towards corruption are slowly changing, as the work of the EFCC is creating more awareness and conversation about corruption and showing people that officials may not be as untouchable as once thought. It's important to note that corrupt activity is not limited to those with immunity in office, and that not all in public office are involved in corruption; it is quite pervasive however and extends across all sectors.

TW : Does the strong and largely autonomous nature of the 36 states that make up Nigeria ever result in there being a gap between the anti-corruption legislation passed at the federal level and its implementation and enforcement by local government? And if so, is this likely to continue under Yar'Adua?

ED : Very much so – the states and their governors are powerful. The states are responsible for delivering health, education and infrastructure. Some states fare better and are much better run than others – it's important to remember that there are those in government at all levels working hard to improve things. For others, lack of transparency and oversight and the immunity clause mean that monies allocated to state and local government budgets do not filter down to those they are meant to. This is also an issue of lack of capacity – funds are also misused as there may not be the personnel necessary at the local level of government to manage and monitor budget lines. This is likely to continue under the president for the foreseeable future. Tackling the constitutional reform would make a difference. Capacity building among communities and in local government is also important however.

TW : In February, Vice President Jonathon Goodluck attributed the persistent poverty in Nigeria to a culture of corruption within the petroleum sector. Would you agree?

ED : To an extent – it is true that there is a culture of corruption within the petroleum sector, but the culture of corruption exists beyond this and it is all linked. Nigeria's problems are often attributed to the petroleum sector because oil can be a corrupting commodity. It is low-labour intensive and delivers super-profits. Nigeria has earned perhaps \$400 million in oil revenues in the last thirty years, and the high oil prices of recent years have brought a windfall, particularly to the oil producing states, yet this has done little to improve the lives of millions of Nigerians. It is the job of government to rid the petroleum sector and others of corruption. There is a great deal of finger-pointing and portioning out of blame that goes on in Nigeria, but in the end it is the government that is responsible for creating higher standards of conduct for everyone, including oil companies. The success of the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative is an encouraging sign.

TW : What official measures have been taken to tackle the problem of corruption in the oil sector?

ED : Nigeria has gone further than most countries with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. It was the first country to pass a bill on EITI into law and it is one of only two countries (Azerbaijan is the other) to have published a fully audited and reconciled EITI report. The president now needs to take Nigeria forward into its second audit.

TW : Are the Nigerian anti-corruption commissions independent?

ED : There is a lack of clarity regarding the independence of the anti-corruption agencies, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC). Their legal status with regards to their independence is unclear. The role of the Attorney General and his part in the fight against corruption has raised questions on this issue. While the establishment act of the EFCC grants it full powers to investigate and prosecute a case, and it has proven itself to be quite robust, for example with the arrest of several former state governors, the Attorney General is empowered to "make rules or regulations with respect to the exercise of any of the duties, much independence as possible. Functions or powers of the Commission under [the] Act". President Yar'Adua has focused attention on this directive and many have interpreted this as reducing the powers and independence of the EFCC [see Reuters article]. The independence of the agencies is also impacted by the politics and power relations of Nigeria. During the time of President Obasanjo, many argued that the EFCC was only going after his opponents [see Economist article]. But I would say that given the political interests, manoeuvrings and personal risks their staff must confront, the agencies still try to exert as

TW : Following their visits to Nigeria and subsequent research, what recommendations has the British All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Nigeria made to further the fight against corruption in the country?

ED : The APPG believes that showing international support for the president is important as this will strengthen his position to take reforms forward. The group has also recommended that there be more cooperation within the European Union and with the United States to take action on money laundering within their borders. The links between the UK and Nigeria are strong and this is why so much of the stolen money from Nigeria has ended up in bank accounts in London. However, if it becomes too difficult

for corrupt individuals to launder their money in the UK they may simply go elsewhere, this is why greater cooperation is important. The Group has also recommended strengthening links between relevant institutions and government departments in the UK. The EFCC and Metropolitan Police have a good relationship and good communication, but making progress on corruption also involves the Treasury, the financial institutions, and Nigerian government departments that can share information on individuals' identities.

TW : To what extent does the APPG work or share information with civil society organisations in Nigeria?

ED : The Group attaches great importance to its relationship with civil society in Nigeria. It is dependent on its meetings with civil society members, along with business, political and religious leaders, to gain insight into Nigeria, and so it is vital that every level of Nigerian society is represented as much as possible. For example, on the Group's last visit to Nigeria it met with members of Save the Children to learn of the daily challenges faced by women and children. The group is always keen to meet with members of civil society in Nigeria and encourages interested parties to contact them so that possible meetings can be planned for future visits.

TW : In a report on their visit to Nigeria in November 2007, the APPG strongly agrees with the Nigerian Economic and Financial Crimes Commission's assertion that: "the best assistance that the UK can give to Nigeria is not in the form of aid, but assistance to help them clean up Nigeria." What sort of assistance could the UK potentially provide?

ED : The UK can help by working harder to reduce corrupt activities of British citizens and companies – there have not yet been any prosecutions of British parties complicit in corruption. Sharing of data and information would be of direct assistance to the anti-corruption agencies. Less directly, but most importantly, the biggest difference could be made through support in capacity building: of communities to demand greater accountability; of local government for more effective management; of the National Assembly; and of the anti-corruption agencies.

TW : What does Great Britain already do to support the fight against corruption in Nigeria?

ED : The Metropolitan Police has a Proceeds of Crime Unit, empowered by the 2002 Proceeds of Crime Act. A lot of the money stolen in corrupt activities in Nigeria finds its way into bank accounts in London, so this is why the Metropolitan Police are engaged in fighting financial crime in Nigeria.



The unit shares information with the EFCC and also provides training to EFCC personnel and technical assistance. For its part, the EFCC provides information and evidence to the Metropolitan Police to support investigations in the UK.

The Department for International Development also puts money into programmes in Nigeria to have an impact on corruption, such as building the capacity of the legislature and capacity building of communities to seek greater transparency and accountability of elected officials.

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Nigeria was originally established as the APPG on the Niger Delta in February 2005, but a year after its founding the Group expanded its focus to include the whole of Nigeria. The Group describes its aims as: "to create a better understanding in the UK of Nigeria and the challenges it faces, to build good relations and to support efforts to promote development and social justice in the country." In order to improve its understanding of Nigeria, the issues affecting it and to hear different perspectives, the Group meets with representatives from the business, NGO and government sectors from both countries.

MOVIE REVIEWS

AMERICAN GANGSTER

(Denzel Washington, Russell Crowe, Cuba Gooding Jr)

By Eugene Novikov of Film Blather
(Online Film Critic Society)



"Cops who turn in this kind of money turn in cops who take money."

The most interesting thing about American Gangster is the modifier in the title, and Ridley Scott and Steven Zaillian's view of the same. Both idealistic and deeply cynical, Ridley Scott's film dares to believe in the American Dream while at the same time suggesting that it can be perverted as easily as it can be fulfilled. After all, Frank Lucas (Denzel Washington) -- capitalist, family man, drug

lord, individualist, innovator, murderer -- is basically its very embodiment, while his rival, Russell Crowe's Detective Richie Roberts, loses virtually everything arguably because of his honesty and dedication.

Provocative stuff, this, essentially arguing that the values this country was built on winds up rewarding vices more than virtues, and letting the wrong cream rise to the top. (The film's closest ideological kin in recent years is probably Scorsese's misanthropic Gangs of New York.) In less confident hands, this material might have seemed heavy-handed, even uncomfortable - I can see myself accusing an alternate-universe American Gangster of being a thinly-veiled communist screed. But Scott and Zaillian are veterans if anyone is, smart enough to lean on character, not push too hard, and trust the performers to sell the big moments. It works: the film is taut and compelling, seeming iconic instead of derivative, its point of view emerging from the story and not the other way around.

Lucas rose to power in the 1970's, at the height of Vietnam -- indeed, he used his army cousin to smuggle the heroin directly from the growers in the war-torn nation. He became the unofficial successor to his mentor, Bumpy Johnson (Ciarance Williams III), the legendary and beloved mobster who, we sense, did things differently: when we first see him, he is distributing turkeys from the back of a truck. Lucas admires the man, and later continues the turkey tradition, but he's not terribly interested in being loved (except perhaps by his family, whom he moves into a mansion). He's a businessman -- find a supplier, establish a brand, cobble together a network, and sell, sell, sell. If protecting his brand and reputation means shooting a man dead on a crowded city street in broad daylight, well, that's business.

If Lucas is determined to be the kingpin -- beholden to no one -- Richie just wants to scrape by with a shred of integrity intact. He's basically defined by having turned in nearly a million dollars in drug money at a time when the standard practice for cops is to seize heroin, cut it, and sell it back; his fit of honesty makes him a pariah. But the film does a nice job of playing down any self-righteousness, such that when his estranged wife later accuses him of giving back that money "to buy being dishonest about everything else," we want to get defensive on his behalf. In what's turning out to be a banner year for him, Crowe is fantastic, a realistic and even funny portrait of rectitude -- Richie serving a subpoena by pitching it, with surprising athleticism, through a rapidly closing motel room door is one of those perfect movie moments I'm always grateful for.

The movie is clearly aiming for the gangster

pantheon, though it spends more time than usual on the law enforcement end of the food chain. (On the other hand, with Josh Brolin playing the single most corrupt cop in the history of corruption and cops, what the hell's the difference?) What keeps it from getting there, ultimately, is a curious flatness -- American Gangster chugs along swimmingly, but there are no peaks or valleys, no opportunities for emotional release; the pace doesn't vary, and that can get exhausting. Scott tried a similar strategy a few years ago in Black Hawk Down, one of his best films, but there the relentlessness and lack of affect were essentially the point -- part of what made the war-is-hell film so powerful. Here, there is no such thematic confluence, and Scott just comes off as ungenerous.

But an ungenerous Ridley Scott is still better than pretty much anyone else, generous or not, and American Gangster is a smart and engaging pleasure. Its politics could have muddled and distracted, but instead the presence of a point of view staved off biopic boredom. This could have been a prestige picture on autopilot, but instead it's something genuinely interesting.

LIONS FOR LAMBS

(Tom Cruise, Robert Redford and Meryl Streep)

By Sean O'Connell - Copyright @ 2007 Filmcritic.com



LIONS FOR LAMBS

Earlier this year, screenwriter Matthew Michael Carnahan pressed similar buttons with his Middle East muscle thriller The Kingdom. He uses his current pulpit to chastise the Bush administration for blindly leading America into a winless war; the national media for blindly following our leaders in the weeks, months, and years following September 11; and Generation Y for retreating to its PlayStation consoles as opposed to penning protest letters to local politicians.

Loosely set in real time, Lambs tracks three storylines that unfurl over the course of one hour. In his Capitol Hill office, GOP savior Sen.



Jasper Irving (Tom Cruise) grants reporter Janine Roth (Meryl Streep) an exclusive interview. He quietly confesses that Iraq was a mistake before mapping out our country's next strategic international operation in Afghanistan.

Across the country, California college professor Stephen Malley (Robert Redford, who also directs) chastises a once-promising student (Andrew Garfield) for wasting his potential. Malley's motivational tool is a story about his two best students who, against the teacher's wishes, chose to serve their country by enlisting in the military. Not surprisingly, Malley's scholars (Michael Pena, Derek Luke) are the lead soldiers in Irving's Afghani front, and things aren't going as planned for the brave paratroopers.

Carnahan writes with Aaron Sorkin's topical urgency. Actually, until the end credits rolled, I wrongfully assumed the West Wing creator wrote *Lambs*. Sorkin has a script in play for the Oscar season, but it's *Charlie Wilson's War*, which he adapted for director Mike Nichols. Both stories handle military manoeuvrings in Afghanistan, so we'll have to wait until next month to learn which script is more politically biased.

As for Carnahan, he cribs some of Sorkin's long-standing traits. The loquacious *Lambs* is informed, unabashedly opinionated, admirably current, and heavy handed. Carnahan can twist a phrase, too. When Roth tries to catch Irving when he says we'll need a constant presence in Afghanistan to succeed, he succinctly deflects her advances by explaining, "I said 'constant,' not 'permanent.'"

As with Sorkin, Carnahan's characters also exist on level playing fields, so a slacker college student can sound as intelligent about America's foreign policy as a two-term senator. The scripter supplies a palpable lack of faith in the system, which Redford embraces. The preachy *Lambs* assigns plenty of blame to the government, the media, and the military for the current mess we're in.

There's no getting around the fact, though, that the body blows landed by *Lambs* -- that the Iraqi conflict was a mistake; that our armed forces trusted faulty intelligence; that the media failed to demand answers from our leaders -- would connect with more crippling force if they were spoken by actual senators, soldiers, college professors, and journalists instead of seasoned actors reading lines from a polished screenplay. Cruise can, and does, sound convincing when he applies his trademark salesmanship tactics to the Irving role, but I'd prefer to hear a real politician speak so honestly about

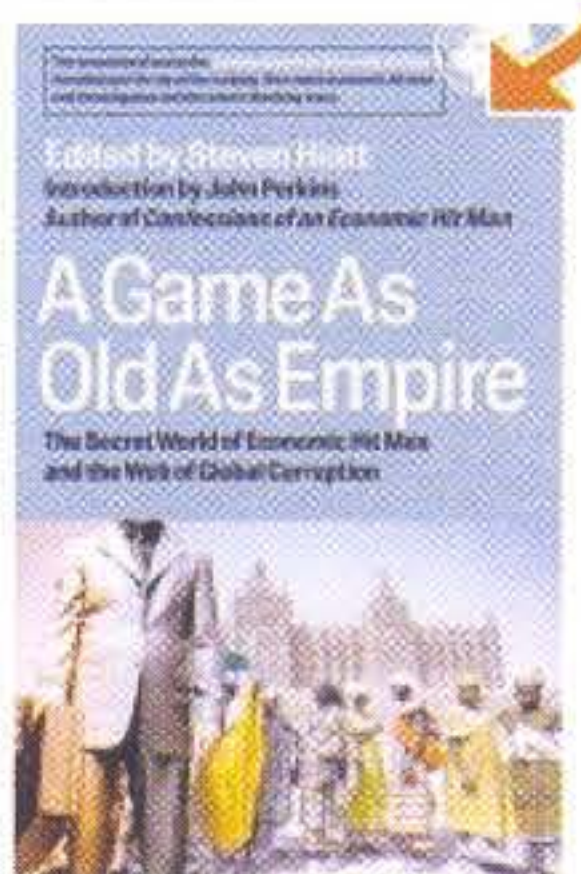
Iraq. Perhaps Carnahan's script can be summarized by a few lines Redford tells his student: "You're great with words, son. But do you know what would be even better? If they had a heartbeat."

BOOK REVIEWS

Disturbing Though Important Revelations of World Situation

April 7, 2007

By C. Middleton (Australia)



John Perkins' ground breaking expose' of the economic machinations and collusion of multinational corporations, high levels of government and the international banking institutions and their brutal exploitation of third world countries in his popular text *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, sent a ripple of concern through this highly corrupt elite community, however mainstream publishing and media chose to ignore these disturbing confessions, wanting proof other than Perkins text. As Perkins states in his introduction in this sobering and informative text, *A Game as Old as Empire*,

"Eventually a courageous independent publisher, Berrett-Koehler, took the book on. *Confessions* success among the public astounded me. During its first week in bookstores it went to number 4 on Amazon.com." (P.2)

Despite being on the New York Times best seller list for 25 weeks, The Times refused to review it. (Much later the book was featured in the Times Sunday Supplement) The fact that the book implicates the highest echelons of government and corporations, including the IMF, WTO, World Bank, U.S.A., Britain and the "G8" countries deeply involved in money laundering, tax evasion and environmental disasters that turns one's stomach, never mentioned in the main stream media, reveals the appalling extent of this corruption.

A Game as Old as Empire is a collection of essays by investigative journalists, EMH's, academics, practising lawyers, scientists and writers exposing the extent of corruption banks and exclusive, corrupt governments go too far...

in the exploitation of developing countries; for example lending billions of dollars, raising debt, knowing full well that particular regimes were pocketing the cash, opening off shore accounts, while the regime's country falls further into abject poverty, then to lend more money, raising debt further...

These essays are terribly disturbing as the greed, destruction and waste is so vast, crippling small countries, causing poverty to become more entrenched to fill the pockets of a Global elitist few and their cronies.

One would logically assume that because of the billions of dollars poured into some third world countries for their development, one would see the benefits of such huge investments. In actual fact, there has been no benefit, because in most cases, the poverty has worsened. Why? Money is loaned to known corrupt regimes that pocket the money and make the money clean through tax loopholes and off shore accounts.

Other reasons are presented such as the trade agreements of the World Trade Organization which makes it impossible for developing countries with debt to produce and export because developed countries, per the WTO agreements, import products into the local market underpricing them, thus making it impossible for the developing country to rise out of debt, let alone make a living.

In this review I've chosen not to write specific examples of this high level corruption as this format, does not allow the space. However, in order to understand the extent that these so-called elites go to... including genocide, crimes against humanity and all out war and occupation in order to ensure access to resources such as oil and other natural resources, read this text because it will make you wonder how and why it has gone on for so long.

Confessions of an Economic Hit Man started the ball rolling in terms of more awareness of the waste and destruction that neo-liberalism and globalization has wrought on developing countries; *A Game as Old as Empire* is the confirmation and the quintessential wake up call to actually do something about it.

In the last chapter, *Global Uprising: The Web of Resistance*, Antonia Juhasz writes a compelling piece for all concerned individuals around the globe to do something about this entrenched elitist corruption. The bibliography is extensive and worthy, including a list of important web sites to enhance your knowledge.

Even if you haven't read "*Confessions*", *A Game as Old as Empire* will inform, disturb, shock and hopefully stir some of us into action before these elitist corporations,

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES**January 2008**

Jan 14 - Richard Yeoh attended a meeting of NGOs organized by the Bar Council to discuss the progress of the IPCMC

Jan 14 - Richard Yeoh and Theresa Stanslas met the First Secretary with UK High Commission to discuss TI-M projects

Jan 25 - Megat Najmuddin spoke on Malaysia's experience in fighting corruption at the civil society conference in conjunction with UNCAC COSP in Bali

Jan 28 - Richard Wong attended the Conference on Recent Changes in the Corporate Legal Framework "Towards Better Corporate Governance" organized by MICG

Jan 28 - Lee Chong San attended the 2nd Conference of State Parties (COSP) in Bali

Jan 28 - Richard Yeoh and Theresa Stanslas met with Dutch Deputy Ambassador to discuss TI - M projects

Jan 31 - MOC was signed with MAICCI Chairman Dato' Pardip Singh and Tan Sri Navaratnam of TI-M

February 2008

Feb 2 - Tan Sri Navaratnam spoke at forum to commemorate 50th anniversary of UM

Feb 18 - Richard Yeoh represented TI-M at the Conference on Policy Framework for Migrant Labor

Feb 22 - Tan Sri Navaratnam met with Tan Sri Abd Rashid Abd Rahman, Chairman of Election Commission

Feb 27 - The Kenyan Ambassador visited TI-M to learn about our activities, attended by Theresa Stanslas and Fara Zahri

March 2008

Mar 1 - Richard Yeoh represented TI-M at the Workshop on Women's Rights, organized by ARROW

Mar 3 - Exco meeting of TI-M

Mar 5 - Theresa Stanslas met with Anthea Mulakala of Asia Foundation to discuss TI-M projects

Mar 14 - Richard Yeoh and Theresa Stanslas met with the Norwegian Ambassador & the First Secretary to discuss TI-M projects

Mar 22 - Megat Najmuddin spoke on "Corporate Governance" to the Malaysian Human Resource Consultants

Mar 24 & 25 - Theresa Stanslas organized the Workshop on "Towards Improving Malaysia's Forestry Management" chaired by Tan Sri Navaratnam and moderated by Richard Wong, KM Loi, Megat Najmuddin and Indrani Thuraisingham.

Mar 25 - The Annual General Meeting of TI-M

Mar 27 - Richard Yeoh spoke at the TI-WIN Workshop on "Corruption in the Water Sector" in Manila

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