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> Better pay for locals

I agree 100% with the views expressed by the reader under the heading "Better pay for locals" (Text Us! April 26). If the stakeholders concerned could provide better remuneration and amenities, I am sure we won't need foreign manpower. — EFA

> Illegal sightseeing?

Does interstate work permit allow for sightseeing activities? If not, why are so many cars from other states being seen in places where they are not supposed to be? To the authorities concerned, please conduct spot checks. No wonder the number of new Covid-19 cases recorded daily remains high. — Sign

> Monitor renovations

The Penang municipal authorities should be more strict about renovations. I've noticed that many residents are doing illegal extensions and paving over the ground with cement, which is not environmentally friendly. It causes rainwater to run off faster, adding to flooding. Some renovate and extend their "borders" into their neighbour's areas, causing friction. MBPP (Penang Island City Council) officers should keep an eye out for all illegal structures and take action. — Org Kpg Jawa, Bayan Lepas, Penang

> Preserve for posterity

Padang Chetty, or at least its moniker, in Jalan Bukit Jawa, Klang, should be retained to reflect the identity, culture and heritage of the site. — Wayne

> Wait for better times

Is it really necessary to give civil servants and pensioners bonuses when there are so many others who are out of work and food? Civil servants as a group probably have suffered the least from Covid-19 and can surely wait for better times.

> Stop spreading untruths

I appeal to those people who are sharing unverified, false or unbelievable stories/comments about Covid-19 on social media to please stop what they are doing. You are causing untold harm to our vaccination campaign. The authorities must also be alert and stay abreast of all these irresponsible people. — Lin, Kajang

> Badly brought up

People who indiscriminately throw away used masks either do it on purpose to infect others or lack the basic traditional values of civic consciousness. — Lee Hui Seng

> Dog rescue applauded

With one paw up, I salute all those involved in the impromptu mission to rescue Dafu from harm and danger on the road. — Yoyo (Man's Best Friend)

Your opinion

Buckling under the weight of regulation

WHILE it is enshrined in the Federal Constitution that Malaysians can prosper equally by doing business on the land, the National Land Code does not seem to tango with the land laws of Sarawak and Sabah at some point.

Agriculture is an integral part of the Malaysian economy in rural areas. People are cultivating food crops such as rice, tapioca, kangkong, etc. Others, like the Orang Asli, also forage for natural resources from the forest besides planting their own crops. Integration of food crops with livestock is also an important activity for people in rural areas.

With the availability of land and knowledge of planting practices, tree crops such as rubber, coconut and oil palm have been planted. These have contributed significantly to the Malaysian economy.

But the pursuit of these people to escape poverty may be hampered if the government continues to create regulations without consultation with them.

The oil palm industry, for instance, has flourished immensely and contributed significantly towards the country's export revenue. Palm oil currently accounts for about 8% of gross national income (GNI).

The complete supply chain of the oil palm industry provides employment to about two million Malaysians throughout the country. Both public and private sector companies, big and small, including many cooperatives, associations and smallholders, are involved in the cultivation of oil palm.

To some extent, even the government has direct interest in oil palm businesses through certain agencies, state governments and government-incorporated private companies.



Photo: FAIHAN GHANI

The Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) Act 1998 was introduced to, among others, enhance the livelihoods of many Orang Asli (natives).

However, unlike other sectors, the oil palm industry is subjected to a number of taxes, levies, duties and cess by the government. These taxes contribute tremendously to the coffers of the federal as well as state governments, including Sarawak and Sabah. All sorts of legal framework and mechanisms have been invented to tap the lucrative businesses of the palm oil production industry.

Almost all levels of the government structure are burdening the industry in this aspect. In the peninsula, for instance, even the local municipalities are finding ways to encroach into the estates by imposing "cukai pintu" on workers' quarters. This has never been done in the past.

Recently, the Human Resources Ministry unilaterally decided to spread the Human Resource Development Fund (HRDF) levy on the plantation sector. Our dedicat-

ed Plantation Industries and Commodities Ministry (MPIC), which was primarily established to safeguard and protect the industry, is so difficult to reach. Planters on the ground are in dire need of assistance and fair treatment from the demanding forces circling around them.

On the international front, the oil palm industry is facing a number of adverse criticisms due to alleged non-conformity to sustainable practices, non-satisfactory end products, treatment of workers, etc. The industry is also struggling to meet the demand for high-quality end products. There is an urgent need to enhance best practices on food safety during preparation.

Hence, stringent regulations and control are indeed necessary. All these call for more money to be forked out. The authorities must therefore help to protect the industry.

DATUK DAUD AMATZIN
A smallholder professional planter
Kajang

Probe the allegations and take strict action

THE National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO) views seriously the responses of the authorities to the social media posting of a schoolgirl regarding sexual harassment and rape threats.

A teenager who is brave to share her unfortunate experience on social media, knowing full well the kind and unkind responses that she will get from friends and strangers, should not have to face adverse remarks from people who should be protecting her.

Her teachers and school apparently failed her. The rape threat was dismissed as a possible joke.

On what grounds are these dismissive notions being made? Would we have the same misconceptions if it happened to our daughter or granddaughter? Shouldn't every child be treated the same?

NCWO calls on the Education Ministry, police, and Women, Family and Community Development Ministry to investigate the allegations and take strict action on all involved.

Keep our girls safe in school.

PROFESSOR EMERITA TAN SRI DR SHARIFAH HAPSAH
President, NCWO

Think of others who are in need

IT was recently announced that the government would be giving financial aid to civil servants and pensioners. This is not the first time the government has been very generous to civil servants and pensioners since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the numerous movement control order periods over the past year, government servants and pensioners continued to receive their monthly salaries and pensions. In contrast, there are many people who have lost their livelihoods and are strapped for cash now. This pandemic has caught many people unprepared.

The Prime Minister himself has said that the government is running short of money. Why then must the government give this kind of bonus to civil servants and pensioners who are already drawing their monthly salaries and pensions every month? Is there no better way of spending this money? I am sure there are others who are more deserving of financial aid from our generous government.

I am a pensioner and even though I am thankful to the government for its generosity, I feel guilty receiving the bonus when there are others more deserving. I will most likely donate the amount to someone more deserving.

REBECCA CHIENG
Kuching

CAPT (R) OO KWAN HUAT
Butterworth

Rape is not a matter that can be joked about or trivialised

I REFER to the ongoing news articles on the case of the student who lodged a report that a classmate had threatened to rape her after she called out her teacher for making jokes about rape in a TikTok video. Since then, some have attempted to play down the issue with comments like "Female teenage students are a bit sensitive and emotional."

But this is a matter of major concern. Why? Because a growing body of research has revealed that exposure to and tolerance of sexist humour fosters a social climate of discrimination against women (Woodzicka & Ford 2010, "Framework for thinking about the effects of sexist humour", *Europe's Journal of Psychology* 6(3), pp 174-195). In fact, men who were exposed to sexist jokes reported greater acceptance of rape myths and violence against women.

We may say these are just foolish young boys. But what happens if such attitudes are allowed to per-

sist and these foolish young boys become men of tomorrow? Men like the PE teacher who seems to think that joking about raping someone over 18 is acceptable? Men like the former US president, Donald Trump, who was caught on tape bragging about kissing and groping women? Men who think that a rape threat is a "joke"?

Do we really want to stand by and allow our boys to develop into such men?

The #MeToo movement reminded us that male sexual violence, harassment and abuse towards women is not a new phenomenon (Lockyer & Savigny, 2018). In fact, rape jokes continue to normalise and legitimise sexual violence towards women through "humour". It is disgusting that girls/women are expected to just quietly smile and accept this form of degradation to our dignity.

I am glad this girl publicised this matter. She has shown us that such patronising, perverse and patriar-

chal attitudes are still prevalent today. Will the good men out there please tell us if it would be as funny if the PE teacher were to crack this joke to your own daughter, sister or mother? Would it be a joke if your daughter, sister or mother (who is obviously above 18) were raped because this attitude has been encouraged and fostered?

If the answer is a resounding "no", then pray tell me, why would it be a joke to someone else's daughter, sister or mother?

As a matter of fact, it would be a nice change if decent men speak up for the women and girls in their lives. It is said: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

In this case, the only thing necessary for the triumph of sick, perverted men is for upright men to say nothing.