

Final Report on Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin

Introduction

Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin, aged 70 and former minister of Rural and Regional Development, is currently the political party member of United Malays National Organization (UMNO), but lost his membership in the Parliament for Shah Alam, Selangor, defeated by Khalid Abdul Samad of Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) in the general election of March 8 this year. He started his political career in 1975 as special assistant to the former Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. He served as political secretary to Mahathir from 1981 to 1999. He was appointed as Senator for Dewan Negara in November 1999 and as Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Education in December 1999. In March 2004, he was elected as member of Parliament for Shah Alam, Selangor, and then appointed as Minister of Rural and Regional Development until stepping down in March this year.



Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin

He is a staunch supporter of Mahathir and a conservative and nationalist political figure who was once quoted as criticizing "some Muslim organizations" for their demands that affect "harmony of the nation" as well as urging manufacturers to label their products in Malay, not only in English, in 2002.

We have set up a few hypotheses for later testing and then some schematic steps for pursuing to find out the desired result. The hypotheses are,

- Aziz Shamsuddin obtained his political clout and reputations by adhering to Mahathir, embedded him with some risks which might haunt him later in his career as exemplified by attempted distancing by the current prime minister Abdullah.
- Aziz Shamsuddin is a typical bureaucrat who used to take advantage of any opportunity for taking credit for himself in government policies and local development.

- Aziz Shamsuddin does not have a clear appearance to general public, but is close to and welcomed by business people who benefited from his policy measures and personal relationships.
- Aziz Shamsuddin could have gotten into more distress once former deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim gain more power in the future, but he should be able to resolve the impasse by his friendliness with businesses and past credibility and reputations in local development.

Aziz Shamsuddin sustained most of his political career in Kuala Lumpur (and Putrajaya), so I spent 5 days in there gathering information. I was unable to get in touch with government officials in both Ministry of Education and Ministry of Rural and Regional Development. At the same time, I have tried to make contact indirectly with UMNO officials and some business people through friends in Kuala Lumpur which also got very limited result. Furthermore, I spent one day in Shah Alam, Aziz's representing district, but I failed to meet any related person there as I planned. Chinese represent a large proportion in such areas as Kuala Lumpur and Selangor and some of them are alleged to be close with Aziz Shamsuddin. On the other hand, I did not go to Gopeng, Perak, Aziz's hometown, as I previously planned, since people familiar with him advised me not to go there. Aziz's power circle was around Kuala Lumpur, so it would be in vain to go to Gopeng.

1. Biographic Data

A. Personal Profile

Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin was born June 10, 1938 in Gopeng, Perak. He was married to Datin Asmah Hussain, who died in a car accident about ten years ago while Aziz was also injured. He was also married to Datin Seri Rosmawaty Abdul Raffar. He has four children: Mohd Nasazali, Mohd Nafrizal, Nurfatin and Nurshasha Ain. It was also known that he once planned to marry Dr. Ristina Majid, one of the key players involved in Anwar Ibrahim's downfall, at the time just before the trial. The marriage did not materialize.

His personal name "Abdul Aziz" is a typical Muslim name, so he is not of Chinese origin because most Chinese in Malaysia are not Muslim and they were not forced to change their Chinese name as what happened in Indonesia or Thailand. Moreover, we could not find any evidence to indicate that he is of Arabian origin, although Malay names are often drawn from Arabic. The addendum in his name "Abdul" means, as in Arabic, "servant" which always followed by one of the names of God in the Qur'an as in our case "Aziz" (a short-hand for

"Al-Aziz"). The patronym "Shamsuddin" is by custom his father's name, so it's not the family name. Most Malays do not have family names. Thus, such persons as Encyk Sulfa Shamsuddin, Sharil bin Tan Sri Dato Sri Shamsuddin, Shafie bin Shamsuddin, etc. do not likely have any family links with Aziz Shamsuddin, although they all are sons of some persons who's personal name happen to be Shamsuddin.

Actually, as one of the inetrviewees told me, Aziz Shamsuddin is the only outstanding member of his family. Thus, neither his father nor his sons have reached any high social status. His sons are notoriously corrupt, as their father, but they did not have any similar high achievement. Also, since Abdul Aziz is of very low profile and always behind the scene, we could only see very few of his public appearances, not to mention his family members.

We will, by the way, provide some information about Shafie bin Shamsuddin. Shafie is the first Asian managing director appointed withing the Carrefour international chain. He graduated from Nanyang Technological University with business degree and started his career with Carrefour ten years ago. He was promoted to department head in 1997 before climbing the managing ladder very quickly through division manager, regional director in Singapore and then as managing director for Malaysia/Singapore in January 2006.



Shafie bin Shamsuddin

B. Education Background

Abdul Aziz was a teacher after graduating from Sultan Idris Teachers' College. As to whether he, on the contrary, obtained his diploma from Institut Perguruan Kota Bharu (Kelantan), we could not find any related evidence. In his 30's, he pursued further education in the University of Malaya, where he has been president of Malay Language Society for two years, and earned B.A. degree in International Relations in 1975. In order to check the authenticity of his B.A. degree, I went to UM for some investigations. The International Relations programme in UM began in the 1970s under the Department of History. In 1992 an International Studies Progreamme was established under the patronage of the Dean's Office, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. In 1999, it was upgraded and reorganized as the

Department of International and Strategic Studies (JPAS). Thus, the programme on International Relations did exist in the 1970s, but it's really very difficult to verify whether Aziz Shamsuddin got the degree by his own or by other means.

However, it is reasonable to doubt the authenticity of his credentials. Malaysia started its affirmative action "New Economic Policy" (NEP) in the 1970s. NEP is a government strategy to increase Malay people's status, in especially economic respect, by requiring all sectors to adjust their stock-holding, board membership and employment in accords with ethnic proportions. The *bumiputra* (Malay and other aboriginal people) possessed only about 4% of total wealth of the country even though they occupied about 65-70% of the total population in 1970. So the NEP was meant to shore up economic weights of the *bumiputra*. Thus, we could speculate reasonably that Aziz Shamsuddin was one of the beneficiaries who have got special arrangement by the government in acquiring a degree in, especially, public universities for them to be eligible for higher positions in the government.

The other piece of evidence we can use is that Aziz joined UMNO as a member 35 years ago which was about the time during his alleged UM years. Thus, we could safely speculate that he was asked, or required to join the party by then in order for him to benefit from special treatment of the government. This is not uncommon in many authoritarian countries. I myself also had similar experience about thirty years ago here in Taiwan, even though in somewhat different occasion. However, this is what have happened nearly 40 years ago, so it's extremely difficult and actually impossible to verify.

C. Psyco-sociological, Cultural and Religious Personalities

Aziz is a staunch supporter of Dr. Mahatier and a conservative and nationalist political figure who was once quoted as criticizing "some Muslim organizations" for their demands that affect "harmony of the nation" as well as urging manufacturers to label their products in Malay, not only in English, in 2002.

He is a devoted Muslim, as some people have claimed. Since he is close to many Chinese, he is not hesitant to take any opportunity to call for racial harmony as he once asked "all races" to be "sensitive" to each other's feeling and not raise "sensitive issues". However, he always shy away from the public so it's really hard to discern his personalities clearly. As one of the interviewees (a newspaper reporter) recalled, Aziz has never made any public appearance during his ministership. Thus, he is a very discrete man who was always behind the scene, which rendered him such advantages as he is always ready to be summoned by his patron to do jobs far away from public notices and to give people impressive assurance that secrets will not be easily disclosed.

There is no doubt that he is corrupt. As I asked my respondent to compare him with other corruptive officials, he was ranked as somewhat in the middle. We could find many people who are much worse as well as much better than him. And since he has neither attractive charisma nor impressive community service records, it's not a big surprise that he was voted out of the parliament and consequently his ministership in March this year.

D. Principle Qualities and Defaults

His loyalty to Dr. Mahathir, no matter during or after the latter's premiership, is a quality worth mentioning. It is natural for him to follow and obey Dr. M's instructions without any question while in power, but it is rather a rarity for him to continuously support his old boss even when Dr. M's authority was fading away very fast. Aziz has broken his silence over the Mahathir-Abdullah impasse in 2006 and commented that Mahathir doesn't harbor personal grudges over his successor. As a Mahathir loyalist, whatever he says, Aziz says from a "beholden to Dr. M" vantage point.

Because of his very rare public appearance, it is difficult to describe clearly Aziz's qualities. As regarding his defaults, his long-time habit of maneuvering behind the scene has put a murky cloth on him which inevitably gives people unfamiliar with him a feeling of suspicion. The defeat in this year's general election and consequently the dropping out from the cabinet all revealed his increasing unpopularity in public eyes. But this really can not be described as his default, because some people may find him trustworthy as evidenced by very few scandals upon him except for the Anwar trial right after the financial crisis. Yet this could be attributed to general Malaysian's particular reticence with regard to judging politicians' behavior. Because of this peculiar trait in Malaysian society, I bumped into a great difficulty in my investigation for the project.

E. Place in the Family and His Relationship with Major Family Members

Aziz Shamsuddin is the most prominent member of his family. Besides him, the whole family seems disappeared except for some hearsaying about his corrupt sons who are reported as much worse than Aziz himself. As reported in *Malaysia Today*, his sons, both became "Dato" in their 20s, are "well-known cheaters and conmen."

F. Career Profile

Right after his graduation from UM, he served, from 1975 to 1979, as special assistant to Dr. Mahathir who was then the Education Minister and as director of National Civic Bureau (*Biro Tata Negara*, BTN). BTN is a shadowy organization in the Prime Minister's Department, whose members are in all important Malay Organizations, including UMNO, KeADILan and PAS. Most political and private secretaries of cabinet ministers are from BTN.

They are members of a selected group, described by their detractors in the civil service as the Gestapo, the stormtroopers of Malay control. And Aziz Shamsuddin served as the first head of this so-called "brain-washing" organization. BTN has several course modules which all public university students have to attend in the name of "Student Development".

From 1981 on, he was political secretary to the Prime Minister until November 1999, when he was appointed as Senator for Dewan Negara and Deputy Minister of Education. In November 2002, he was re-appointed as senator for Dewan Negara. He won a seat in the parliament in general election of March 2004 for Shah Alam, Selangor and was appointed as Minister of Rural and Regional Development. He lost his ministership after he was defeated in general election of March this year.

In his political party career, he has been a member of UMNO for about 40 years and was Chief in Gopeng Division, Perak from 1982 to September 1993, and again from 2004 until now. In May 2000 he was elected as member of UMNO Supreme Council until 2003. He was placed 21 out of 25 elected members. In 2001, he was defeated in Gopeng in UMNO division elections, but he later regained the position. Recently, as he's been sacked from the government, he was also reported to be giving up his post as Gopeng UMNO division chief (news of August 10).

What are the benefits of being an UMNO division chief? According to my interview respondents, party maneuvering is very important in Malaysia's politics which is full of rent-seeking and other corruptive activities. Division (*bahagian*) chiefs are key players in party machine which can keep things more discrete and cause much less publicity. Party division chiefs and government officials interact frequently and in many cases they are the same persons. The party-government mingling in Malaysia results in a very effective and lucrative political arena for those advantageously involved.

2. Integrated Analysis

A. Personal and Family Fortunes

About Aziz's property possession, there is one saying that he has houses across Malaysia. And even though he has house in Shah Alam to be qualified as representing the city for the last two general elections, people claimed that he does not live in there. However, the above was reputed by some other person who claimed he was familiar with Aziz and the latter was readily available to see anyone there during weekdays and weekends, even during raya.

B. Modes of Fortune Acquisition

I can only make some speculations in this section because there is no definite and specific evidence I could conjure up in whatever means.

First, Aziz was the first head of BTN, the nesting place for many important Malay politicians. This gave him leverages in acquiring favors from those who later stepped into high government positions. Secondly, he has been party division chief for so many years which, through specific party politics in Malaysia, rendered him many discrete routes for acquiring special benefits. Thirdly, he has been former premier Dr. Mahathir's political secretary for fifteen years which had given him a great privilege to acquire fortunes along with Mahathir's other confidants as well as his family members. One blogger revealed that during 1996 to 1998, just when he was political secretary of the MP, Aziz had an account in Israeli National Bank with a fixed deposit of US\$3.5 million. Fourthly, as Minister of Rural and Local Development, he had many contact with grassroot developers, especially through the supervision of the Ministry on Felcra Bhd (Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority), which rendered him a lot of opportunities to create rents sought by those eager to earn government contracts. And the last, but not the least, factor in his advantage is Shah Alam where he twice represented to contend for Parliament seats and happens to be the city the Proton Motor, the national privileged car manufacturer, is located. This gives him a convenient leeway to access many local and foreign motor companies which are in one of the important strategic industries.

With regards to his modes of asset acquisition, land and houses seem to be his favorite. Real estate can be acquired as a graft or through other means such as making partnership with developers under much privileged transaction terms. It has been alleged that he possesses houses in every place of the country, but this is very hard to verify since there are so many ways to conceal the reality by, for instance, transferring entitlement to other people.

It is reasonable to suspect that most of his wealth acquisition were related to Dr. Mahathir. He was always with, actually closest to, Dr. M for the past more than thirty years and had acted discretely obeying every instruction of Dr. M. George Soros recently called Dr. M the second most corrupt leader after Suharto of Indonesia. However, Dr. M was not corrupt personally despite the fact that his sons presides on boards of over 300 companies. This is the most vivid description people have on him. Thus, we can imagine that loyalists of Dr. M. such as Aziz Shamsuddin also showed this kind of double-faceness. On the public side, we just couldn't find any trace of corruption on him, and yet, privately, all kinds of suspicions were around. He earned Dr. M's full trust since he will never turn against the latter by forming his own network of nepotism.

C. Previous Judiciary Cases

C.1 The Anwar Event

Our finding is that Aziz Shamsuddin always acted in low profile. He was very close to Mahathir and used this closeness with the former prime minister to wield his influence in political and business spheres. The only judiciary case we were aware about him is that he was one of the four persons named by Anwar, in his defense on sodomy charge, as master conspirator to topple him. It was reported that Aziz, after he was sworn in as senator, told a news conference that he was not involved in the conspiracy to topple Anwar. In early March this year when Mahathir campaigned for Aziz in the general election, Dr. Mahathir scoffed at the suggestions that he had been influenced by Aziz in sacking Anwar Ibrahim as the deputy prime minister in 1998.

This showed the closeness between Mahathir and Aziz, as Mahathir did not campaign for all other MPs except for Aziz. On the other hand, it also awakened memories that, before the end of Anwar's trial about 6 years ago, the evidence raised by Anwar's witness named Raja Komando who mentioned that he was invited to a meeting with a few persons to plot Anwar's downfall which involved Aziz Shamsuddin. So Mahathir's special campaign trail to Shah Alam for Aziz only arouse more suspicions that he was paying back for some favor Aziz did for him about ten years ago. This also reminds people of the unexpected appointment in 1999 of Aziz Shamsuddin as Deputy Minister of Education, as he was directly linked to the conspiracy allegation brought about by Anwar Ibrahim.

Anwar and his adopted brother Sukma Darmawan Sasmitaat Madja were accused of having sodomized Anwar's former family driver Azizan Abu Bakar at Sukma's apartment at Tivoli Villas, Bangsar on one night between January and March 1993. Sukma, a businessman, was also charged with abetting Anwar in sodomizing Azizan at the same time and place. Anwar was also accused by Ummi Hafilda Ali who wrote a letter to Mahathir in 1997 alleging that Anwar committed adultery with her sister-in-law, whose husband was Anwar's secretary at the time.

Anwar claimed he was a victim of a political conspiracy led by aides to Mahathir, who he said were behind the letter sent to Mahathir in 1997 that formed the basis of the charge against him. Anwar testified that police investigations showed that Finance Minister Daim Zainuddin, Consumer Affairs Minister Megat Junid, and Aziz Shamsuddin schemed to have the letter sent. Anwar reiterated that these allegations were "malicious, scurrilous and irresponsible." He said Mahathir himself first showed him the letter at the time and told him

to "read and destroy" it. He said he was later informed of the involvement of Aziz Shamsuddin in the Ummi Hafilda affair.

Raja Kamarudin Abdul Wahid, an UMNO local branch head, testified that in 1998 Aziz Shamsuddin had instructed him to organize a campaign to politically destroy Anwar and his supporters. Aziz told Raja Kamurudin that he had been responsible for circulating the *50 Reasons Why Anwar Cannot Become Prime Minister* booklet at the 1998 UMNO national conference in which unsupported claims of Anwar's misconduct were made. Raja Kamarudin testified that Aziz alluded to a slush fund when he said that no expense should be spared in the campaign to frame up Anwar. "He said he didn't care if the operation cost millions. He told me just to send him the bill."

Anwar was defeated in Malaysian court, but some later incidents seemed to show some delayed justice. First of all, Ummi Hafilda Ali was disowned by her father before he died. And then it was Azizan Abu Bakar who crashed his car, which resulted in his wife's death. He was later arrested for khalwat (close proximity) and sentenced to six months in jail.

Now comes to Aziz Shamsuddin who too crashed his car and his wife too died. It was reported that when they took her body to hospital they discovered a cheque for RM 3 million on her body, which was a bribe for a contract he had awarded a Chinese company. Furthermore, the Attorney-General then, who was in charge of fixing Anwar's trials, lingered into a one-year coma after falling down and hitting his head when he suffered a stroke.

Dr. Ristina Majid, another conspirator, was pissed drunk while her niece, whom she was entrusted to baby sit, drowned in the swimming pool. Her father too disowned her and he died without forgiving her for what she did to Anwar. Dr. Ristina died of a stroke in a conference in Jakarta. She in fact wanted to marry Aziz Shamsuddin but he did not want her. And Azizan Abu Bakar was for a while employed by her as her driver.

C.2 Relations with Hamzah Zainuddin

There is another judiciary case which I think was indirectly related to Aziz Shamsuddin. The person involved is Datuk Hamzah Zainuddin, who is former chairman of Felcra Bhd (Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority) and now the deputy minister of Housing and Local Government. He is also a confidant of Mahathir and one of the conspirators mentioned by Anwar to topple him. He is also the UMNO division chief of Ipoh Barat, Perak, the same state where Aziz Shamsuddin also served as UMNO division chief, in Gopeng. He has bad reputation of corruption and people suspected how he could have accumulated tens of millions of ringgit of assets as revealed by a RM11.2 million divorce settlement in cash and assets to his ex-wife Nooraini Abdul Rashid in 2004.



Datuk Hamzah Zainuddin

Felcra is a government-owned land development company which is under the supervision of the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development, where Aziz Shamsuddin served as the minister since 2004. In the same year, Felcra was under the investigation of Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) over an alleged graft of RM72 million awarded to its subsidiary Felcra Niaga to purchase fertilizers from China. Hamzah Zainuddin, along with several other board members had been questioned by the ACA. Felcra, since it being established in 1966, has a long history of corruption.

Some questioned what did Hamzah do for Mahathir that resulted in him being appointed the Felcra chairman in 1999. Also, despite all the suspicions of misbehavior toward Hamzah, why Aziz still kept him on the post until October 2006 when he was replaced by Nasaruddin Hashim, an appointment also questioned by many people. Nevertheless, we could so far not be able to find any solid evidence that Hamzah and Aziz were intimately related except that both were close confidants of Dr. Mahathir.

C.3. The Recent Sodomy Accusation of Anwar

The recent sodomy accusation on Anwar was allegedly conducted by current deputy premier which had nothing to do with Mahathir or Aziz Shamsuddin, as one of my interviewee told me definitely. It was a strategy played by politicians in power today against each other. Thus, it is inappropriate to allude it to Aziz who is already outside of power circle.

3. Past and Present Reputations in Business, Political and Economic Aspects

A. Risks on Images or Reputations

Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin is a man who staunchly adheres to the proverb "silence is gold." In a country where people were always intimidated by such an opinion-suppressing "Internal Security Act" (ISA), it is really difficult to solicit any comment on Malaysian politicians' misbehavior, especially those related to crime or terrorism. Even though the ISA was meant to stifle political dissent in the first place, it seems to be present in everywhere of Malaysia. So, it is nearly impossible for me to ask questions related to oppression since people either have

never heard of any overt public crime as it would have long been suppressed by the ISA (so most cases were covert), or they are afraid to talk about it which may incur mishaps on them under the ISA. Anwar Ibrahim was twice detained under the ISA, in 1974 as student protester and in 1998 as corruptor.

Aziz Shamsuddin is a corrupt government official, as many others in high office. But, he has never been subject to any crime accusation, except in the Anwar event. But even in the latter, he was absolved from standing in the court because Mahathir came to the rescue (also for himself) just in time. Thus, he will not incur any risk related to overt accusation of public crime, or terrorism. But again, there is no definite evidence on this point since nobody wants to clarify it.

B. Influences

Aziz Shamsuddin's influence comes with Dr. Mahathir. As Dr. M is getting older and his political power is fading away, so is Aziz's. His weakness is that he never stands in front, but always behind. Even as a behind-the-scenes man, he seems to have lost confidence by stepping out from the nomination of UMNO division chief in Gopeng, Perak (news report at August 10). This does not mean he's lost any influence, but, in Malaysia, economic power comes with political power. Even for non-Malays, they still need to be close to political core to benefit from the system. So if someone is not in the core any more, he/she has to find ways to get in touch with someone inside. For Aziz, he must still have some political connections, such as Hamzah Zainuddin, the former Felcra Bhd chairman and current deputy minister of Housing and Local Government (I am still waiting for someone to clarify relationship between Aziz and Hamzah).

With regards to Aziz's relationship with Chinese business, there is no confirmation of any specific connection. But as he is out of touch of political power, whatever his influence among the circle of Chinese businesses is fading away (a news reporter I interviewed conjectured).

C. Capacity in Representing Western Countries' Interests

This is the main objective of the report. But it's not clear whether Aziz Shamsuddin has any strong foreign connection. The reason is that he, as UMNO division chief, deputy minister of Education and minister of Rural and Regional Development for the past decade, was mostly dealing with domestic affairs and local people. Even though there could be foreign businesses involved in, for example, land development, the NEP and its succeeding NDP measures all exclude foreign interests from grassroots development. Unless Aziz has

some influence in high-tech industries, his representing capacity for western country interests seems quite limited, as one interviewee conjectured.

Appendix

Note : I've tried to contact several people. However, the following is the only effective and meaningful interview. All the others were just very short and meaningless.

Interview with general manager and a senior reporter of the largest Chinese newspaper in Malaysia

Place: Royale Bintang Hotel Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur

August 12, 2008

On Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin's family background

⇒ Identification of father/mother: name and professions, social and geographical origins: is he from Arabic origins? Chinese links?...

A: First of all, we've tried to contact the UMNO headquarter here and ask them about Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin, but they wouldn't tell us much. Aziz is a very low-key person, so not much is known about his family.

⇒ Possible influential family members: does he have close family members at influential positions in the business/political sphere?

A: Aziz is the only outstanding member of his family. All his other family members, including his sons, don't have any prominent achievement.

⇒ Mohammed Shamssudin and Hashim Shamsuddin were involved in a bank corruption scandal in the 80s (Hashim was executive director of Bank Bumiputra), is there any relationship with Abdul Aziz?

A: There should be no relationship, as you know Malaysians don't have family names.

On his diplomas

⇒ Did he obtain his diploma from the Institut Perguruan Kota Bharu (Kelantan) or from Sultan Idris (Perak)?

A: I have no idea.

⇒ Did he really pass the BA of international relations at the University of Malaysia (or was it a kind of “service” given to him for his chairing the Malay language society at the University from 1973 to 1975?)

A: You can go to UM and try to ask for such information at the administrative department. But I am not sure they will tell you anything.

⇒ A positive answer to the first one (IPKB) would imply a possible lie related to the BA from Univ. of Malaya.

Some missing infos and dates

⇒ When was he chairman of the National Technical Univ. College of Malaysia (KUTKM) ?

⇒ He was Chief of the Gopeng division from WHEN to 1993 and then from WHEN to July 2008?

⇒ When was he Director of the National Civil Bureau?

⇒ He was chosen in 1980 to become Alhi Jawatankuasa UMNO Bahagian Tambun and Naib Pengerusi UMNO Cawangan Gunung Mesah ; what are the advantages, responsibilities of these positions?

A: Bahagian means division. UMNO division chief is a local political machine who played important roles in connecting the local with the central governments. Aziz was chosen as division chief as a political manoeuvring and, I guess, as some kind of favour. Division chief is a convenient tool for party politics in which many benefit can be arranged or solicited.

On his relationship with

⇒ The business community

- Has he ever worked for Malaysian or foreign companies ?

- If so : which one ? For what kind of job ?

A: I wonder if he ever had any significant relationship with foreign companies. Because, on one hand, he is an inside man who always did his tasks behind the scene and, on the other hand, he served as deputy minister of Education and minister of Rural and Regional Development, which are all department dealing with domestic affairs, there is not much opportunities for him to get in touch with foreign organizations. However, he is an invisible man, so it is possible that he could have done many things without anybody's notice.

⇒ The Chinese community

A: As far as I know, he is not so popular among Chinese, even though he may have some close Chinese friends. However, I was impressed and grateful when he came to the rescue when our newspaper was once shut out by the government and he helped to reverse the order.

On his Reputation / Influence

⇒ Has he got the reputation to be more corrupted than other local politicians?

A: He is corrupt alright, just like many Malaysian government officials. If you want me to rank him, I shall say he is in the middle among all corrupted politicians.

⇒ What are his political networks on the actual scene?

A: He is Mahathir's man, so all his political networks were related to Dr. M.

⇒ Why has he lost his political influence in Selangor and Perak ?

A: People were just tired to see such a man hanging on the political scene for such a long time.

On his personal assets

⇒ His land/houses in Malaysia / abroad?

A: It would be very difficult to verify. Do you have any evidence?

⇒ A blogger says he has a financial account in Israel :
(<http://sloone.wordpress.com/2008/06/11/recalcitrant-judges-in-boot-camps/>)?

A: I really have no idea.

⇒ The RM 3 mil. On his wife's body which was alleged to be a bribe related to a contract for a Chinese company?

A: I heard about it in somewhere.

⇒ His links with Hamzah Zainuddin and possible involvement in FELCRA corruption?

A: Hamzah is now the deputy minister of Housing and Local Development. That's the only thing I am aware of.

**Interviews with Ms. Tricia Yeoh, Director of the Centre for Public Policy Studies,
Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI)**

First contact through e-mail, August 16, 2008

Second contact through telephone, August 22, 2008, when she came back from abroad

Third contact through e-mail, August 22, 2008

Received her first reply, August 30, 2008, acknowledged that she'd received my inquiry of August 22 and that she need more time for collecting information

Received her second reply, September 5, 2008, which advised me to contact instead Dr. Nungsari, who never reply my inquiring mail

The following is the inquiries I sent Ms. Yeoh in August 22:

Q: I am interested in Malaysia's land development and NGO's reactions toward its relationship with the country's party politics. The organizations I am focusing on is the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (MRRD) as well as Felcra which is under the supervision of the Ministry. Felcra, as a govt-owned company responsible for rural and land development, has a long history of corruption as far as I understand. For example, in 2004 Felcra was under the investigation of ACA over an alleged graft of RM72 million awarded to its subsidiary Felcra Niaga to purchase fertilizers from China. Despite all the suspicions of misbehavior toward its chairman, Datuk Hamzah Zainuddin, now the deputy minister of Housing and Local Government, why he still could be kept on the post from 1999 until 2006, especially by the consent of the minister of MRRD Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin? Since both Hamzah and Aziz serve as UMNO division chief in Perak and are also confidants of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, that's why I'm wondering what party politics has been playing in Malaysia's rural and land development.

My questions are as follows. How serious and what was involved in such party political maneuvering (for example, what are the benefits of being party division chief)? How the party politics affected the effectiveness of Malaysia's rural development. If possible, could you give me some commentaries in terms of relationship between Aziz and Hamzah as examples. Furthermore, are there many foreign businesses involved in Felcra's operations? What about Chinese businesses, as I understand Felcra is dealing mostly with Malay's land? Also, what are the roles played by NGOs in such political maneuvering? Any noteworthy examples?

A: (her mail in August 30) Corruption was surely a serious problem in Malaysia. However, I need some time to collect information.

Interviews with three scholars from Universiti Kebangsaan, Malaysia

During my visit to Kuala Lumpur, mid-August

One of them (1st scholar) was appointed by government to delve into corruptions in Malaysia with several other experts in order to get to some resolving schemes; another (2nd scholar) was a prestigious scholar very close to Anwar Ibrahim.

Q : Are you familiar with Aziz Shamsuddin or Hamzah Zainuddin?

1st Scholar: I have no idea.

Q : Can you tell me something about corruption in Malaysia ?

1st Scholar: The present government is very concerned and asked me to form an investigating group to do some study and come up with some resolving schemes.

Q : Will any committee be organized ?

1st Scholar: Only if necessary. We first have to decide if it's so serious and some strong measures are needed. I know something about the Felcra, but I have no recall whether it had any connection with Aziz Shamsuddin.

Q : Any comment on Anwar ?

2nd Scholar : I admire him, but I don't want to support him. First, he only uses the coalition of opposition parties to reach his own ambitions. But there is no *de facto* two-party competition in Malaysian politics as he claimed. He is only manipulating his supporters and playing a political game which will not get to anywhere as there is not any realistic plan in his pocket. And secondly, he only did his campaign for the sake of opposing the incumbent government. There is no ideology involved.