

Headline	Dogged by poor handling or crises		
MediaTitle	The Heat		
Date	29 Mar 2014	Color	Full Color
Section	NEWS	Circulation	20,000
Page No	40	Readership	60,000
Language	English	ArticleSize	371 cm ²
Journalist	BY YEOH GUAN JIN	AdValue	RM 6,337
Frequency	Weekly	PR Value	RM 19,011



Dogged by poor handling of crises



My Say

BY YEOH GUAN JIN

THE triple crisis of hazy days, water shortage and a missing airliner has shown us Malaysians up for who we really are: a disorganised community of people.

Conflicting advice and poor crisis management have dogged our handling of these problems from the onset, at times making us seem like we either don't want to resolve these problems or we don't know what to do. Worse than that, we let political differences get in the way.

Of course, the rain has already brought some respite from the haze. The water problem is easing, and there is hope that if the rainfall continues over catchment areas, our water problem will soon be just another bad episode. Even the Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 mystery may soon be solved. Experts have concluded that the aircraft had flown along the southern corridor and ended up in a remote part of the Indian Ocean.

But the fact remains that we are certainly not prepared to deal with even one, much less three, issues all at the same time.

Take the haze and the water shortage for instance. On one hand, the authorities have advised us to

consume less water. Water rationing has been imposed on several areas in the Klang Valley and despite some rainfall, the water shortage remains a big problem.

People have been advised to refrain from using water for purposes that are not considered essential, like washing the car. On the other hand, contractors have been advised

to spray water at their construction sites to keep pollution down. Now that would be a sheer waste of a valuable resource.

Over and above that, there is a plan to build a road that will cut through forests in Selangor that contain vital catchment areas. Fortunately, Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri G. Palanivel has come out quickly to assure that there would be no highway that would split the grounds of the Forest Research Institute Malaysia into two.

However, there is no word yet about a plan to have the planned highway pass through parts of the Selangor State Park.

Now that the euphoria over the signing of a memorandum of understanding on the water issue between the Selangor government and Putrajaya has died down, there is concern that the federal government may not meet its end of the bargain.

Our fears are not without basis. Under the deal signed between the two sides, the Energy, Green Technology and Water Minister Datuk Seri Dr Maximus Ongkili is to invoke the Water Services Industry Act 2006 to take over the four water concessionaires in Selangor. Now, it seems, the minister has decided not to meet that part of the deal.

Of course, our handling – some would call it mishandling – of the missing flight has been well documented. Conflicting information and allegations of updates being withheld from relatives of those on board are among the main complaints.

Malaysia Airlines' offer of cash aid to the family members of the passengers on that flight has not gone down well with the Chinese, who have more than 150 people on board. In the middle of a crisis, such a move would be considered insensitive – these people do not expect money. All they want is to have their loved ones back.

Fortunately, acting Transport Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein brought some semblance of order when he took over the task of dealing with the media.

Some may say that so many other countries are also known to have handled crises imperfectly, so we should not expect too much of the Malaysian authorities. This is nothing short of saying it is all right to not measure up to expectations. We have a tendency to compare ourselves with those who are not as capable as we are. This will not help to raise our standards.

One can find many reasons to explain this incompetence that has led us to this state of affairs. The most obvious is our lack of experience in handling so many crises at the same time. Granted, not many governments or organisations have had so many problems land on their laps all at once and all demanding immediate solutions.

The missing airliner issue has overshadowed the other two in the past weeks but it does not remove the fact that those are equally in need of our attention.

At the same time, we could do well to have all parties involved talk to each other instead of issuing conflicting statements or giving instructions that are at odds with each other. Those tasked with handling these crises should also check the facts before saying anything that may cause further distress.

It may be too late to redeem ourselves, but let's plan to do better if, God forbids, there is another crisis. **THE**

Headline	Dogged by poor handling or crises		
MediaTitle	The Heat		
Date	29 Mar 2014	Color	Full Color
Section	NEWS	Circulation	20,000
Page No	40	Readership	60,000
Language	English	ArticleSize	371 cm ²
Journalist	BY YEOH GUAN JIN	AdValue	RM 6,337
Frequency	Weekly	PR Value	RM 19,011

*The Heat's deputy editor-in-chief **Yeoh Guan Jin** enjoys the occasional beer at the pub, but he does not take kindly to patrons who try to shove their views down other people's throats*