



BISHAN:

Champion for
the People
and the Land

Editors:

Josie M. Fernandez

Mohd. Yusof Abdul Rahman



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**Federation of Malaysian Consumers
Associations (FOMCA)**

First published in 2008

Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations

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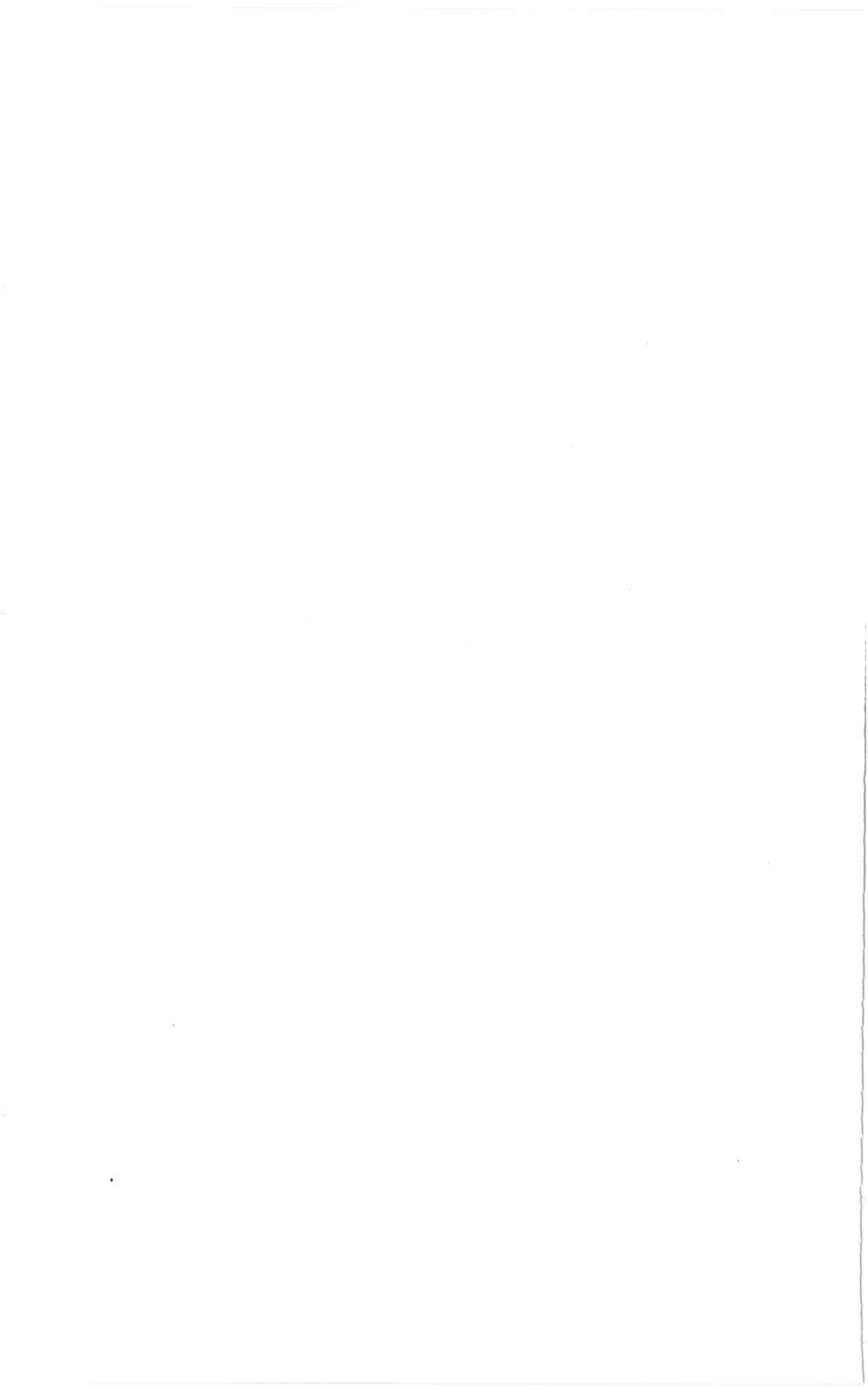
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Bishan...

touched the lives of all Malaysians



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Abbreviations

AIM	Asian Institute of Management
AMN	Ahli Mangku Negara
CAP	Consumers Association of Penang
CETDEM	Centre for Environment, Technology And Development, Malaysia
CI	Consumers International
EPSM	Environmental Protection Society of Malaysia
ERA	Education and Research Association for Consumers, Malaysia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FARM	Farmer-Centred Sustainable Development
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority
FOMCA	Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations
IOCU	International Organisation of Consumers Unions
JP	Justice of Peace
MENGO	Malaysian Environmental NGOs
MINSOC	Management Institute for Social Change
NGO	Non - Governmental Organisation
PAC	Pahang Association of Consumers
PAN AP	Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific
PCSD	People-Centred Sustainable Development
PSK	Persatuan Sejahtera Kuantan
SMP	Setia Makhota Pahang
SUSDEN	Sustainable Development Network
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

Foreword

When Bishan Singh Bahadur was elected as President of FOMCA in 1981, he strived to transform the national federation into a prominent and professionally managed organization to achieve a vision of 'a fair and just society' and a better quality of life for all Malaysians. FOMCA, Bishan would often remind its affiliates, 'is an organization for the people and by the people'. After his departure from the consumer movement, Bishan became a development practitioner and consultant, working with communities and farmers.

Several programmes and projects took centre stage in the transformation of FOMCA. During Bishan's tenure as President, the FOMCA's Five Year Plan was launched in 1984. Among its components were consumer education, policy development, enhancing representation in government committees, food campaigns, pharmaceuticals, legal literacy and environment. In 1985, the Small Claims Court was established. Amendments to the Trade Descriptions Act, the Hire Purchase Act and the Food Act were made, thanks to the efforts of FOMCA. Communication and engagement with the affiliates were enhanced significantly.

The Pahang Association of Consumers (PAC), of which Bishan was President from 1976-1996 was a grassroots organization. It established branches all over Pahang including the Fel'da Schemes. PAC had the distinction of

being the largest consumer association in South East Asia in the 1980s.

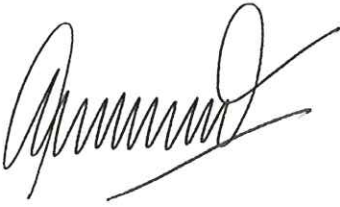
In a keynote address for the National Consumer Convention on 13 March 2001, Bishan stated that after a crisis in FOMCA in 1988 and after 20 years in the consumer movement, he went in search of a new development model that was more humane, just and sustainable. Bishan advocated this model through his work as a development practitioner.

Bishan made many sacrifices in his journey from teacher, consumerist to development practitioner. He resigned from teaching to work full-time in FOMCA in 1988 - he gave up a government pension and other benefits of the civil service. He was away from his family when he went to study at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM), Philippines. His travels as a development practitioner and consultant to remote lands kept him away from family and friends. Despite these absences, Bishan kept in contact with his consumer colleagues and abreast of developments in the consumer movement. He found time to assist with training of the staff of FOMCA.

Bishan's passions were people and the environment. The tributes in this commemorative volume by his colleagues and friends capture his love for land and people very graphically. A consummate story teller, Bishan's stories revolved around people and places.

This commemorative volume is FOMCA's small tribute to a consumer leader whose work touched the lives of all Malaysians. The tributes come from people who were part of a period in Malaysian history during which civil society faced tremendous challenges.

Thank you to all for making this small endeavour in memory of Bishan Singh possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Marimuthu', with a stylized, sweeping flourish at the end.

Datuk N. Marimuthu
President
FOMCA

30 Jan 2008

Milestones

BISHAN SINGH BAHADUR

- President of Pahang Association of Consumers - 1976 - 1996
- President of FOMCA - 1981 - 1988
- Founder and Executive Director of the Malaysian Institute for Social Change (MINSOC) and Senior Regional Co-coordinator of MINSOC's Development Services - 1989 - 2006
- Senior Advisor of the Farmer-centred Agricultural Resource Management (FARM) Programme with the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations – 1992-1999
- Member of the National Consumer Advisory and Protection Council of the Ministry of Trade and Industry (now Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumers Affairs) -1981-1988
- Councillor in the Kuantan Municipal Council - 1983-1985
- Chair for Sustainable Development Network (Susden) Malaysia -1995 - 2006
- Co-Chairman International Organisation of Consumers unions (IOCU) - Consumer Education Working Group - 1984 -1991
- Chairman of Malaysian Environmental NGOs (Mengos) - April 2006 - Nov 2006

- Board member of Pesticide Action Network, Asia-Pacific (PAN-AP) - 1991 - 2006
- Advisor for Women Development Initiative Malaysia and the Women Development Magazine (Penita) – 2003 - 2006

AWARDS RECEIVED:

- Awarded the Ahli Mangku Negara (AMN) by His Majesty the King of Malaysia, Justice of Peace (JP) Roll of Honour by His Royal Highness, the Sultan of Pahang and the Setia Makhota Pahang (SMP) award by the state of Pahang.
- Recipient of the National Consumer (*Tokoh Pengguna*) Award from the government of Malaysia in 1991.
- Recipient of Langkawi Award 2006 for Environmental Conservation.
- Recipient of DiGi Telecommunication Amazing Malaysians 2006 award.

A True Patriot

Ramdas Tikamdas

I first met Bishan in 1975 when he reported to school as a teacher in Sekolah Menengah Sultan Abu Bakar, Kuantan announcing in his usual gregarious story-telling style that he had been ignominiously transferred from Bentong for his grassroots activities; he was a Gerakan Supreme Council member then – and some higher ups didn't like it. Guess who was the Member of Parliament of Bentong then and the Deputy Education Minister too!

He was a natural born organizer of people for causes he believed in. He immediately got some of us around telling us we should show “them” that transferring him meant expanding the Bishan network; he zeroed in on me, made me the Gerakan President of Kuantan and the Kuantan delegation went to Penang led by him for our first Gerakan General Assembly. I believe it was 1975 – and we addressed the assembly of over a thousand people on national issues relating to education, equality and integration. After my university days that was my first opportunity in civil activism. We did not have the makings of politicians, so we let our political membership lapse and continued with Bishan in other social work in the Pahang Consumers

I realized after a while, that in politics one does not fight for socio-economic and political justice – that is often just a farce.

– Bishan Singh, Business Times (9/6/1984)

Association, which through his leadership became the consumer association with the largest membership in South East Asia.

I left teaching for law and Bishan left teaching to organize full time the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (FOMCA). For eight years (1981 – 1988), he was the President, the janitor and sweeper of the FOMCA office which was also his home at the UDA Flats at Jalan Pantai Baru, in Kuala Lumpur, transforming it from a small consumer first floor outfit into a national consumer organization with international acclaim and outreach.

I remember the day of *Operation Lalang* on October 27th 1987, when in the late evening shadows of the dusk, I met Bishan just outside the FOMCA office, both not daring to venture to the office, with the despairing rumours spreading about arrest after arrest of friends and acquaintances, social workers, teachers, preachers, honest parliamentarians and ordinary citizens - nothing made sense at all and everyone was fair game.

I invited Bishan home and we drank to our sorrows lamenting the nightmare that had befallen our nation. We both agreed the leadership had gone mad and power had

got to their heads and in their delusion or stupor, no longer could make out who among Malaysians were the good, the bad and the ugly.

At the worst of times and best of times, we would be at home sharing stories, ideas and jokes and he could not pass my garden on the way to my living room without plucking some leaves and while munching away, he would lecture my wife about the herbal and medicinal mysteries of my garden. His latest pickings would inevitably be the salad for our dinner.



Meeting at a pondok in Timor Leste

When he resigned from FOMCA and went international to work with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, we met less but still regularly either in Kuala Lumpur or in Kuantan. He had no shortage of stories or experiences from the hinterlands and remotest parts of India, Bangladesh, Nepal, China, Vietnam, Indonesia and other parts

of the world about farming methods and environmental sustainability. Their gain was our loss; for one of Malaysia's maladies is that it does not know how to reap the full potential of its own citizens.

He was to his last days a true patriot and was deeply committed to social justice and self-empowerment of the people. He was a free spirit who was carefree in his ways and was happiest while in the farms with nature or in his garden.

Even in his fifties, he would do things like climbing coconut trees and his fall on one occasion led to painful movement and declining health. Just about a week or so before his end, when doctors could not diagnose his blood condition despite intensive tests, he told me that he believed it might have been something he picked up from some aboriginal roots in some hinterland while on his overseas trips.

Until the end, he had stories to tell and had theories and solutions for everything from local politics to international relations, from garden herbs to self-medication. He was a born social organizer of people and could mobilize and conscientize the most ordinary and apathetic of folks. This was his unmistakable talent. He touched many people, had friends from the most humble to the most high and both would be equally privileged by his stories and theories.

His needs were amazingly simple, his ways ordinary, in his leisure he was happiest with friends in the evenings after his work for the day was done; only his visions and dreams were high and lofty. I had the privilege to be his friend.

Ramdas Tikamdas is a senior lawyer and legal advisor to FOMCA and advisor for ERA Consumers Malaysia. He is also the former President of HAKAM (The National Human Rights Organisation)

Bishan Singh: Pejuang Perlindungan Pengguna dan Pencinta Alam Sekitar

Profesor Dato' Mohd Hamdan Haji Adnan

Seorang pejuang perlindungan pengguna dan pencinta alam sekitar telah meninggalkan kita buat selamanya pada 29 November 2006. Lantaran kegigihan beliau selaku aktivis pengguna, Bishan telah dianugerahkan sebagai penerima tokoh pengguna yang pertama bersama-sama dengan Tuan Haji Yusuf Ahmad, Presiden Persatuan Pengguna Kelantan. Pada awal tahun ini, beliau dihadihkan dengan Anugerah Langkawi kerana sumbangan beliau yang cemerlang terhadap perlindungan dan pemuliharaan alam sekitar. Begitu juga, pada tahun ini beliau telah dianugerahkan oleh sebuah syarikat telekomunikasi sebagai "Lima Di Antara Rakyat Malaysia Yang Menakjubkan". Beliau juga dianugerahkan dengan pingat Jaksa Pendamai Pahang.

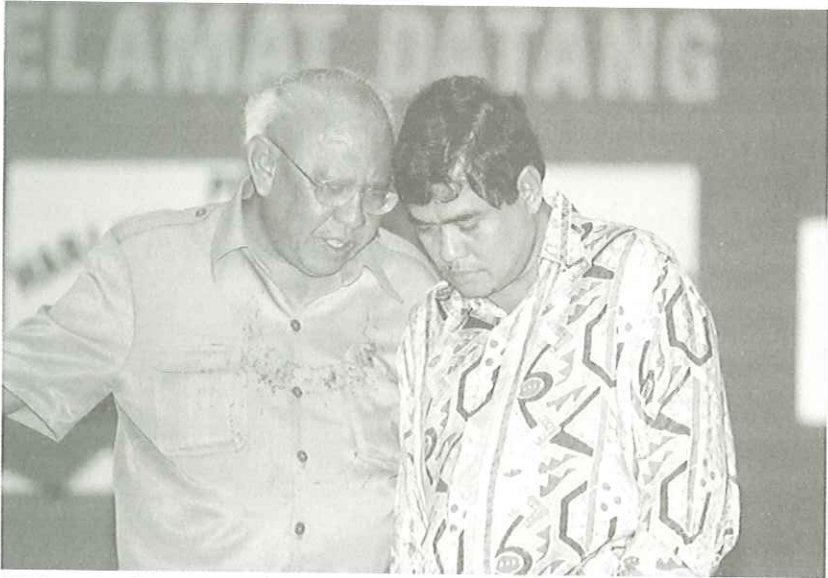
Setiap anugerah yang diterima beliau memang kena kepada orangnya. Bishan Singh memulakan kariernya sebagai seorang guru. Kemudian beliau tertarik dengan

politik. Namun apabila beliau terlibat dengan pergerakan pengguna, beliau sanggup melupakan karier politik dan memberi tumpuan sepenuhnya kepada perjuangan perlindungan pengguna dan alam sekitar.

Beliau menjadi Presiden Persatuan Pengguna Pahang selama 20 tahun. Semasa menerajui persatuan tersebut, namanya kian terkenal hingga ke peringkat antarabangsa. Bishan telah berjaya membawa persatuan pengguna ke peringkat akar umbi. Dengan usahanya, Persatuan Pengguna Pahang (PAC) semakin terkenal di kawasan luar bandar, termasuk Rancangan Felda, yang banyak terdapat di Pahang.

Beberapa cawangan Persatuan Pengguna Pahang telah berjaya ditubuhkan di kawasan-kawasan luar bandar dan Rancangan Felda. Walaupun Persatuan Pengguna Selangor lebih awal berjaya membawa pergerakan pengguna ke kawasan luar bandar, namun Bishan melalui PAC telah memastikan bahawa para pengguna luar bandar turut terlibat dengan usaha-usaha perlindungan pengguna.

Beliau turut menerajui Gabungan Persatuan-Persatuan Pengguna Malaysia atau lebih terkenal sebagai FOMCA. Semasa beliau menjadi Presiden FOMCA, penulis ini adalah Setiausaha Agungnya. Lazimnya, persatuan-persatuan di Malaysia sentiasa kekurangan kewangan kecuali Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang atau CAP. Kami terpaksa berkorban apa jua bagi memastikan bahawa FOMCA mampu menjalankan usahanya untuk



Bishan berbincang dengan Hamdan

meningkatkan perlindungan pengguna di Malaysia. Ketika itu saya merupakan pensyarah di Institut Teknologi Mara dan Bishan pula melakukan apa juga yang perlu untuk menjayakan apa yang diinginkan. Saya kagum dengan dedikasi dan idea-ideanya yang bernas untuk meningkatkan perlindungan pengguna.

Saya telah banyak belajar tentang ilmu kepenggunaan daripada Bishan. Kami telah sama-sama menjelajah ke seluruh Semenanjung dan kadangkala ke Sarawak dan Sabah untuk memastikan para pengguna di Malaysia tidak dicabuli hak-hak mereka.

Lazimnya, apabila terpaksa keluar dari Kuala Lumpur, untuk memberikan penerangan tentang perlindungan pengguna atau membantu ahli-ahli FOMCA dalam apa

jua kegiatan mereka, kami sering menaiki kenderaan awam, khususnya bas. Kadangkala, kami menaiki kereta Bishan. Apabila terlalu penat, kami akan tidur di mana sahaja. Kadangkala terpaksa bermalam di mana kereta Bishan mahu berehat. Kami kerap terpaksa tidur di hotel tidak berbintang dan pernah juga di bawah 'bintang' sahaja!

Kami telah bersama-sama berjuang untuk memastikan bahawa undang-undang perlindungan pengguna di Malaysia dikuatkuasakan dan dikemaskinikan. Malah kami telah berjuang untuk mendapatkan satu Kementerian khusus untuk perlindungan pengguna serta akta-akta perlindungan pengguna yang berkaitan.

Hasil daripada perjuangan tersebut, sebuah kementerian yang khusus berkaitan kepenggunaan telah ditubuhkan, iaitu Kementerian Perdagangan Dalam Negeri dan Hal Ehwal Pengguna. Selain itu, Akta Perlindungan Pengguna 1999 (Akta 599) juga telah digubal. Walaupun pada pendapat kami, banyak kelemahan kepada kedua-duanya, namun kami merasakan ini merupakan langkah ke hadapan yang positif.

Semasa Bishan menerajui FOMCA juga, beliau telah menggagaskan konsep pasar tani dan Majlis Taman Negara. Bishan begitu cecal untuk memastikan bahawa pasar tani ditubuhkan bagi memberi peluang kepada para petani untuk menjual keluaran mereka secara terus kepada pengguna. Padanya, tanpa orang tengah, para petani boleh mendapat lebih banyak keuntungan tanpa

membebaskan para pengguna. Dalam hal ini, para petani boleh mendapat pasaran yang tetap sambil para pengguna tidak perlu membeli keluaran mereka dengan harga yang tinggi.

Bishan juga lantang bersuara agar sebuah Majlis Taman Negara ditubuhkan bagi memastikan masa depan Taman Negara terjamin. Apabila ditubuhkan, beliau telah menjadi salah seorang daripada ahli majlisnya. Sehingga akhir



Kelab Pengguna Sek. Men. Tengku Afzan Kuantan



*Pelajar-pelajar
MRSM Perlis
yang mengikuti
sesi latihan*

hayatnya beliau begitu giat untuk melindungi Tasik Bera dan penduduk-penduduk orang asli yang tinggal di kawasan tersebut.

Semasa menjadi Presiden FOMCA, beliau juga aktif memperkembangkan pendidikan pengguna. Beliau telah dilantik sebagai Pengerusi Bersama Jawatankuasa Pendidikan Pengguna, Persatuan Pengguna Antarabangsa, atau ketika itu dikenali sebagai International Organisation Of Consumers Union (IOCU), dan kini sebagai Consumers International.

Apabila tidak lagi menjawat jawatan sebagai Presiden FOMCA, beliau telah menubuhkan sebuah badan yang memperjuangkan kelestarian alam sekitar, iaitu SUSDEN. Beliau masih meneruskan usahanya dalam kerja-kerja masyarakat sama ada di peringkat tempatan mahupun antarabangsa. Beliau juga menjadi penasihat atau anggota beberapa pertubuhan yang memperjuangkan kepentingan masyarakat dan alam sekitar. Bishan juga pernah berkhidmat untuk Pertubuhan Makanan dan Pertanian (FAO), Bangsa-Bangsa Bersatu dan peluang melawat banyak negara termasuk di Afrika untuk memberi nasihat kepada masyarakat-masyarakat yang ketinggalan.

Bishan seorang yang gigih dalam meningkatkan ilmu pengetahuannya. Beliau telah berjaya memperolehi Sarjana dalam bidang pengurusan pembangunan daripada sebuah institusi terkemuka di Filipina. Kegigihan Bishan untuk melanjutkan pendidikannya sehingga akhir hayat seharusnya menjadi teladan kepada kita semua.

Kali terakhir saya bertemu dengan Bishan, yang lahir di Nibong Tebal, Pulau Pinang, ialah semasa perkahwinan anak saya di Sungai Buloh pada bulan Ogos 2006. Seperti biasa, saya dan rakan-rakan lain yang aktif dalam pergerakan pengguna dan alam sekitar turut berbincang tentang isu-isu berkenaan. Ini sememangnya lumrah bagi kami yang telah menjadikan perlindungan pengguna dan alam sekitar sebagai darah daging.

Pada hari Bishan meninggal dunia, saya telah menelefon balunya untuk mengucapkan takziah. Sebelum saya sempat berkata apa-apa, beliau telah menyatakan bahawa, “Kamu telah kehilangan kawan baik”. Saya yang beliau tahu seorang yang lantang, menjadi kelu tidak bersuara. Memang terlalu sukar untuk mencari rakan seperti Bishan untuk terus berjuang demi kepentingan masyarakat walaupun kadangkala keluarga sendiri pun sukar memahami....

Profesor Dato' Mohd Hamdan Haji Adnan merupakan bekas Presiden FOMCA dari tahun 1992 hingga 2004.



FOMCA: 5 OF THE 12 NAMED ARE SOLD IN MALAYSIA

These 12 pesticides were singled out because, collectively, they were responsible for most of the pesticide deaths and much of the environmental damage caused by

Most of the pesticides on the list, like Aldrin and Heptachlor, had either been banned or severely restricted in developed countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina and Colombia.

However, they were still freely available in many parts of the Third World where there were fewer regulatory controls, he told reporters last today.

All three "drugs" have been associated with birth defects in animals while tests by the National Cancer Institute show that Aldrin causes cancer in animals.

For instance, he said, pesticides were being sold in old Guinness Stout bottles with no other caution other than the word "poison" marked across the label.

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Fomca gesa kerajaan kaji memorandum konsep rumah rakyat

KUANTAN, Rabu - Kerajaan digesa mengkaji memorandum konsep rumah rakyat yang dikemukakan oleh Gabungan Persatuan Pengguna-pengguna Malaysia (Fomca) apabila menubuhkan Institut Perumahan Malaysia (Mahri) kelak.

Mengikut konsep rumah rakyat itu, Fomca mendangkan empat kaedah iaitu konsep peruncian, konsep pelan pembangunan, konsep bahan pembinaan diseragamkan dan diadaun ruang-ruang yang mudah diubahsuai.

Presiden Fomca, Encik Bishan Singh Bakula berkata Fomca mengemukakan memorandum kira dua tahun lalu hasil kajian dan tinjauan pembinaan rumah-rumah di negara ini.

Menurutnya, konsep itu bukan sahaja dapat matrikan perbelanjaan malah memudahkan syarikat pembinaan menyertai industri itu luas.

Beliau menjelaskan, beberapa rangka kerja ini sekarang didapati tidak seragam untuk menyediakan bahan-bahan pembinaan menyeluruh.

Mengulas pengumuman Kementerian dan Kerajaan Tempatan yang bercadang kan Mahri, untuk mengkaji bahan-bahan rah dan sesuai bagi industri pembinaan beliau berkata usaha itu sepatutnya sudah dangan.

Menurutnya, rumah sebagai keperluan rakyat perlu mendapat perhatian walaupun agar pembinaannya tidak membengkak.

BERITA HARIAN, KHAMIS, 8 SYAABAN, 1406



Fomca harap majikan ambil kira soal gaji

SETIAUSAHA Agung Gabungan Persatuan-Persatuan Pengguna Malaysia (Fomca), Encik Hamdon Adnan, bebati tip adalah baik, tetapi beliau berharap majikan tip menampung pendapatan pekerja yang bergaji rendah.

Encik Hamdon berkata, beliau pernah belajar di Amerika Syarikat dan ketika di sana mendapati amat tinggi doripada yang diberikan di sini.

Kepada sesetengah orang, apabila memberi tip kepada seseorang, mereka bangga, teru-

egeri menghalapati amalan a hotel di ke-

FOMCA akan pinda perlembagaan

TAIPING 11 Mei — Gabungan Persatuan Pengguna Malaysia (FOMCA) akan meminda perlembagaannya bagi membolehkan kesatuan sekerja, koperasi dan badan sukarela menjadi anggota gabungannya.

Presiden FOMCA Encik Bishan Singh berkata, pindaan itu dijangka diluluskan pada persidangan perwakilannya tidak lama lagi.

Ketika bercakap kepada pemberita selepas menemu para pemimpin Persatuan Pengguna Taiping di sini semalam, beliau berkata perlembagaan FOMCA pada ma-

sa ini membenarkan persatuan pengguna negeri sahaja menganggotainya.

Encik Bishan yakin bahawa FOMCA akan menjadi badan penggerak hak pengguna dengan lebih berkesan lagi jika pindaan itu diluluskan.

Beliau juga berkata, FOMCA sedang melancarkan kutipan derma untuk tabung khas pengguna dengan matlamat kutipan \$20 juta menjelang tahun 1990. Sehingga ini \$10,000 telah dikutip.

Katanya, wang itu akan dilaburkan dan hasil pelaburan itu akan digunakan bagi membiayai kegiatan pengguna. — Bernama

1
'lapati di ke-
adalah suatu

di Australia
l-hotel," ka-

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suatu kerja

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k negara,
nya.
adil dan
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jika ama-



Perjuangan Pengguna

*Aku pengguna,
aku dilemahkan
dengan iklan-iklan dan amalan jualan.*

*Aku pengguna,
hidupanku dipesongkan
dengan budaya pengguna dan nilai materialisme.*

*Aku pengguna,
aku sudah berdosa
dengan amalan hidup tamak dan membazir.*

*Aku pengguna,
aku perlu sedar dan insaf
dengan peranan ku sebagai pengguna.*

*Aku pengguna,
aku perlu mengenal pasti
dengan hak dan tanggungjawabku.*

*Aku pengguna,
aku ada kuasa
kuasa membeli dan menggunakan.*

*Aku pengguna,
aku perlu bertindak
pandai membeli dan cermat digunakan.*

*Aku pengguna,
aku perlu berjuang
bagi mencapai nilai dan amalan hidup yang adil.*

Bishan Singh Bahadur, Pengguna, Jilid 6 Bil 1, 1987



Papa's Secret Garden

Sunitha Bisan-Gunasegaran

It is difficult to write about my father. I miss my father tremendously as any child would miss a loving parent. My mother, brother and I grieve every day with tears in our eyes and sorrow in our hearts. The pain is still as sharp. The final hour is as vivid. The only difference is that one hopes over time, to get accustomed to the pain and loss.

Memories of my father are filled with him working hard every day from dawn to dusk. Always writing, always reading, always thinking of some intervention and always in his garden. My father's constant reminder was to be less attached to the world but yet ensure that our presence in this life brings good to the community around us. Less attachment and to seek self-realisation or simply as he said find the truth.

The garden is where he would give his life lessons to my brother and me. "Nature is the best university," he would say. It will help us understand the Universe and how our souls are destined to merge with it. Just like rivers merging

with oceans. He reminded us that life is God's gift and each breath we take is our gift to God – so we must be mindful of our actions.

I miss him so. Yet with these tears in my eyes, I know the knowledge he has imparted to both, my brother Jeevan and myself, was a mere introduction to the vast opportunities we have to seek. He is always in our hearts and always guiding us. His advice was simple. Work and seek the truth tirelessly.

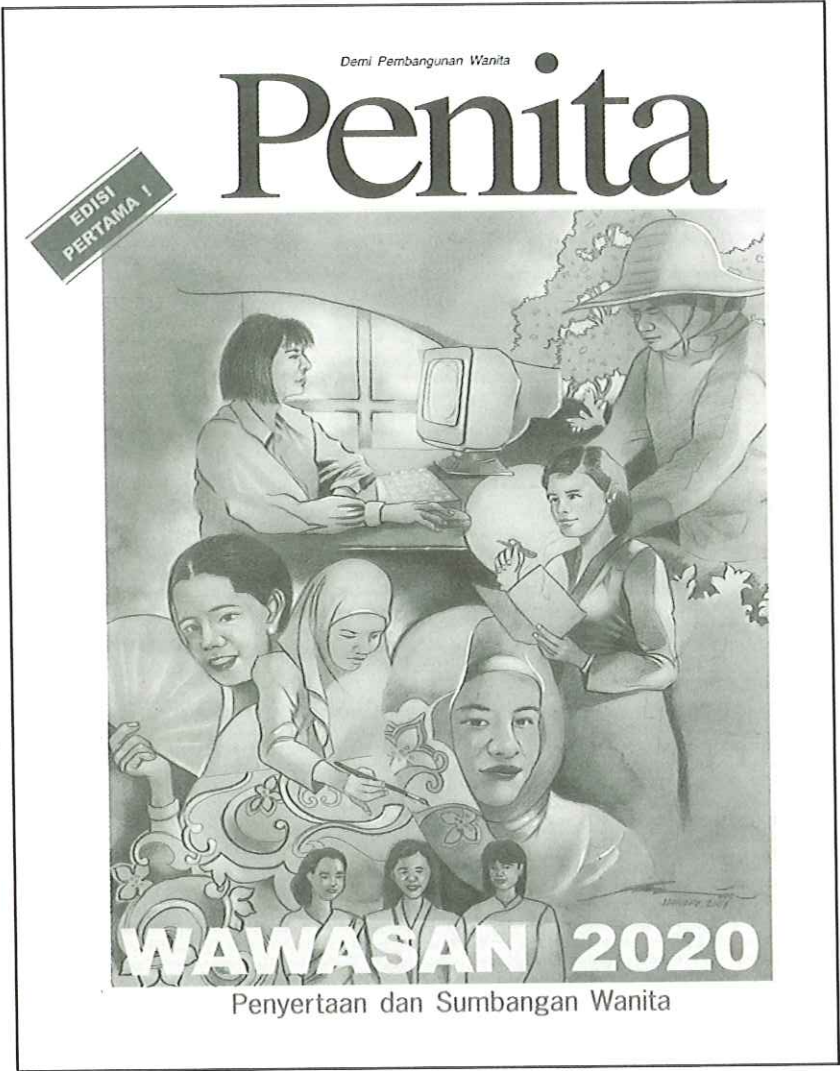
My brother and I am also thankful for his secret weapon – my mother - who has given us such strength to move on. I woke up one October morning and remembered how he loved his garden. This is in memory of my beloved father.

| *Sunitha Bisan-Gunasegaran is the Managing Editor of Penita.*



Papa's Secret Garden

*Hidden is a place within our hearts
A secret garden you have tendered
Where memories abundant
.... Of happy times
.....Of cherished moments
.....Of exciting discourses & argument
Colourful blossoms
You knew will help us find
... Strength
.... Inspiration
..... Endurance
That helps us carry on
For your love is forever
Always illuminating
Within our hearts
In Papa' Secret Garden*



A Truly Amazing Malaysian

Dato' Dr. Anwar Fazal

Malaysia lost one of its special sons on 29 Nov 2006. Bishan Singh Bahadur, a teacher, consumer advocate and eco activist par excellence passed away in Kuantan, Pahang leaving behind a legacy of many good things - among them the Pahang Association of Consumers, the Sustainable Kuantan Initiative, the Management Institute for Social Change (MINSOC), and SUSDEN, a network of environmental NGOs.



*Anwar Fazal, President, IOCU speaking at the FOMCA Council Meeting
15 March 1985*



From left: Bishan Singh (second), and Anwar Fazal (sixth) with Ministry of Domestic Trade officials, 1988

What was special about Bishan was that he gave his whole life to the work of strengthening civil society wherever he was. He was an outstanding teacher -competent, committed and caring, and brought these same qualities to his community work in Malaysia, other parts of Asia and Africa. He was an outstanding facilitator of grassroots community participation and for the last ten years gave much of his life to the farmers of the South especially through various programmes of the United Nations, particularly those of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

But Bishan was more than a doer of good works; he was also a healer, always ready to share his insights into yoga, meditation and breathing exercises; and most of all he was a true Malaysian; his multicultural family, his wife Mary, a senior nurse , and his daughter Sunita, a citizen activist in her own right and his son Jeevan, an engineer, all are the epitome of what we want Malaysia to be ..'Truly Asia' and excellent in whatever they did. They were a family

that were a refreshing example during these times of pathetic outbursts of racism and bigotry!

How would Bishan, a dear friend for 30 years, be like to be remembered? I thought he would have liked to share this poem by Margaret Powers:

*Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glint on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.*

*When you awaken in the morning's hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush
of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft star that shines at night.*

*Do not stand at my grave and cry:
I am not there. I did not die."*

We are glad that you will always be with us. That is how you would want it to be and that's how it will be.

Salams, brother Bishan.

| Anwar Fazal is a recipient of the 'Right Livelihood Award' which is also known as the 'Alternative Nobel Prize'.

Bishan, Neem and A Friend

Dr. Irene Fernandez

As I sit outside my house and look at my small “handkerchief” garden, I feel troubled to see the neem tree trying to survive. This neem plant, now a small tree, is precious. It was given to me by Bishan. He had brought it all the way from Nepal. When he gave me the little plant, he wished that the tree will provide health remedies and I will be healthy all the time. Thank you, Bishan, for the wonderful thought. Neem will always be a sign of hope.

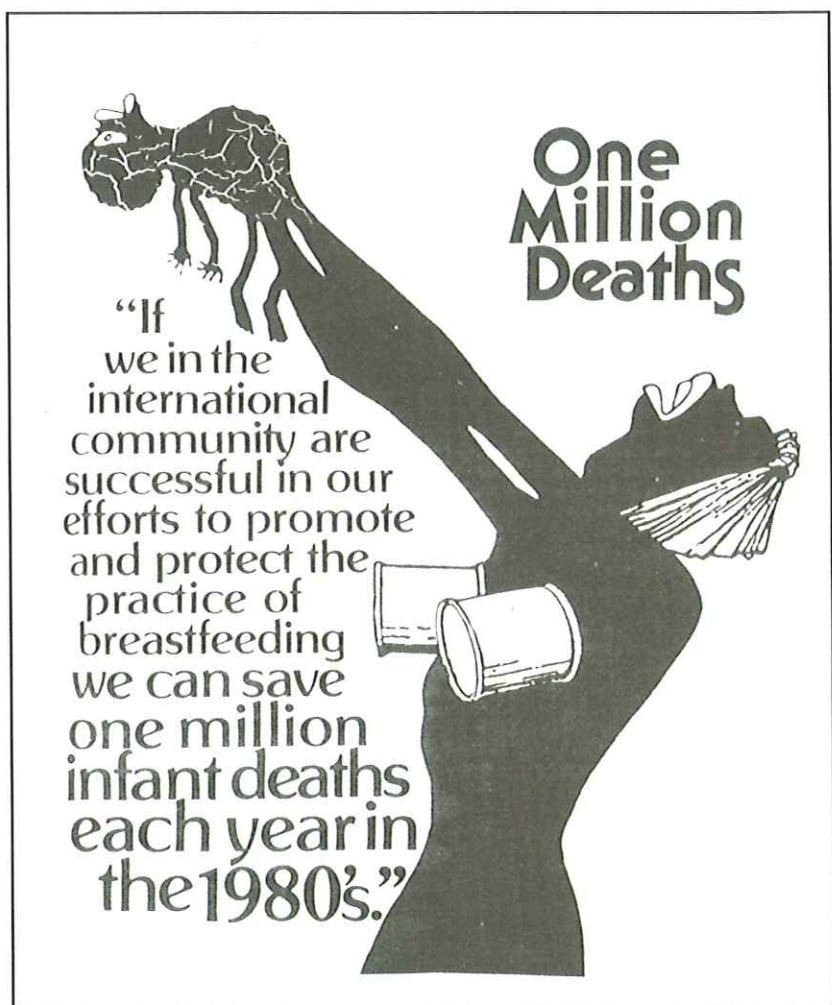


*Neem tree in Petaling Jaya
Photo by: Saravanan T.*

The neem as we know has so many qualities and goodness. It is very much revered, honoured and used for various forms of cure and cleansing. The multinational companies

even wanted to steal the ownership through patenting it but India fought back.

And the neem reflects so much of Bishan. He wanted goodness to remain in all of us. Way back in 1982 when I was executive director of the Selangor and Federal Territory Consumers Association, Bishan was one of the active consumer leaders in the country. We were involved in two



key campaigns. Together with him as head of FOMCA and Pahang Association of Consumers, we formed MIFAN (Malaysian Infant Feeding Action Network). We pushed for breastfeeding and took to task the infant formula companies. The Ministry of Health had no choice but to adopt the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes on infant formula.

The campaign against junk food would not have gained recognition if not for the hard and tireless work put in by Bishan. It even brought Bishan to court when he was taken to court for actions FOMCA took in the campaign against MSG. Legal action or obstacles, Bishan stood by his principles. The then Minister of Education, Anwar Ibrahim, brought out a handbook that gave specific guidelines on the kind of food that could be sold in schools. Junk food was junked.

Bishan's efforts did not remain with the consumers' rights struggles. His heart was with the land and its people. He constantly said that he must set the example. And so he began his own initiatives in sustainable agriculture.

To equate sustainable agriculture to the traditional and subsistence agriculture is looking at sustainable agriculture in a narrow sense. Sustainable agriculture is an old concept made modern by enhancing its meaning. The modern concept of sustainable agriculture builds upon traditional agricultural knowledge and practices. It strengthens it with new holistic and scientific

knowledge that requires intimate understanding of the relationship of the web of life with nature. It requires modern skills of management in sustainable use of natural resources, good farm management techniques and skills, understanding market demands, adding value and developing farm-based enterprises. A farmer practising sustainable agriculture is no longer a mere agriculturist. He is a scientist, farm manager and an entrepreneur – all rolled into one

~ Bishan Singh

As a colleague and co-director in Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific, Bishan brought his immense experiences of working with farmers on food production. Through his involvement with the UN-FAO, he gave us the regional dimension and challenges the rural communities faced in Asia. Bishan, with passion and tireless zeal, worked with farmers to ensure sustainable agriculture was the way forward.

Organic food and yoga were important to Bishan. Each time we met, he would remind me to take care of my health, to do simple exercises and learn to relax. Yes, he taught me many things that constantly come back to me.

Yes, like the neem tree, Bishan had so many great qualities. His friendship, his concern and the thoughts he shared were in numerous ways the cures for many of us. The neem tree in my garden struggles to reach for the sun.

The mango tree has grown big and wild. While the *murungai*, my neighbour's tree, pushes to gain the space, the small neem tree tries her best, in spite of being reduced in size by Joe, my husband.

Whether the neem tree gains ground and space or withers is not important. "What stands out more is how will we continue to ensure the seeds of various struggles sowed by Bishan gain ground and space and bear fruit! Who will take the lead? Who will join hands?"

IT'S YOU! IT'S ME! IT'S US!

Dr Irene Fernandez is Executive Director of Tenaganita and recipient of the 'Right Livelihood Award' which is also known as the Alternative Nobel Prize.



Tindakan Pengguna Menjamin Masa Depan Bersama

*Wahai manusia!
Aku diwujudkan oleh-Nya
dengan kurniaan penuh sakti
dipertanggungjawabkan
menjamin semua kehidupan
segala makhluk ciptaan-Nya.*

*Wahai manusia!
Engkau diwujudkan oleh-Nya
dengan kurniaan kuasa memikir
dipertanggungjawabkan
membina suatu budaya hidup
yang mencerminkan hasrat-Nya.*

*Tetapi apakah yang telah
engkau lakukan?
Renungkanlah ke dalam diri.*

*Mukaku engkau
compang-ampingkan
dengan tebang hutan rimba
dan rata-merata bukit kononnya.*

*Perutku engkau korek dan kau
gali mencari berlian, logam dan
minyak demi pembangunan
kononnya.*

*Airku engkau kotorkan
dengan pembuangan sampah
sarap
bahan kimia serta asid di
merata-rata.*

*Udaraku engkau cemarkan
dengan habuk, debu dan asap
dari kilang, jentera dan
kenderaan.*

*Kulit ozonku engkau musnahkan
dengan pembebasan bahan
kimia dan karbon daripada
penggunaan yang tidak berkira.*

*Wahai manusia!
Andai diteruskan jua
pemusnahan ini
sukarlah bagiku menunaikan
kewajipan
demi menjamin kehidupan
umatmu.*

*Wahai manusia!
Insaflah akan tanggungjawabmu
bertindaklah sebelum terlambat
menjamin kesejahteraan
umatmu.*

Bishan Singh Bahadur, Pengguna, Jilid 6 Bil 3, 1987



Always Alternatives

Abdul Rahman Said Alli

Bishan (as we fondly call him) was humble by nature. This strong quality showed itself in all his work and in the manner in which he approached and interacted with people.

He had very strong views about human dignity in all his endeavours in the realm of public work. Even in the few instances of dabbling in business, he tried to foster and promote such ideals like “social enterprise” and “sustainable development”.

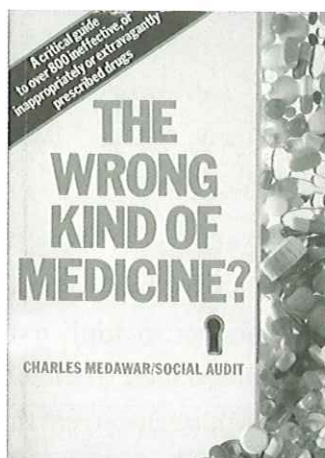
I was (and still am) very critical about the medical profession which I believe fleeces the unsuspecting public who hold doctors in high esteem. So in one of our many meetings, I discussed the need for alternatives to challenge the costs of allopathic treatment. Out of the blue, one day I received a call from Bishan asking me whether I remembered our conversation regarding alternative health remedies. Of course, I remembered our conversation on the need for alternative medicine. The next thing I realized was that I was hosting a group of people from Manila on complimentary treatment called *Pranic Healing*. This

approach was one of the many efforts of Bishan to counter exorbitant medical bills by unscrupulous medical practitioners. Bishan never made nor expected any monetary gain or fame out of his efforts to strengthen the consumer cause. This is the single most important mark in all of his work until he was suddenly plucked from our midst.

Let us all pray for his Soul to rest in peace and tranquility.
Ameen!

| Abdul Rahman Said Alli is the President of the Perak Consumers Association

*Source: The Wrong
Kind of Medicine? By
Charles Medawar/
Social Audit*



‘Pranic Healing’-

Pranic Healing is the science and art of using prana to heal. Prana [also known as chi/vital energy/universal energy] is the body’s life force energy and is distributed around the body via a number of chakras or energy centres. Pranic healing is used in dozens of countries on five continents, and is currently being employed by some medical doctors and researchers to support and complement conventional medicine. Practitioners use their hands to detect energetic blockages and deficiencies in a person’s aura. No physical contact is required because the practitioner works solely on the client’s energy body, not the physical body. The practitioner first cleanses and opens up congested areas using specific sweeping hand motions, then replenishes the energy deficient areas with fresh energy.



Berjiwa Masyarakat

*Masalah kita sebagai anggota masyarakat
adalah masalah masyarakat*

*Masalah masyarakat sebaliknya
adalah masalah kita sendiri*

*Jika kita tidak mengambil berat
tentang masalah ini dan
bertindak mengatasinya...
Ia akan menggugat
KETENTERAMAN dan
KEAMANAN masyarakat
yang akhirnya melibatkan semua orang
- termasuk diri kita sendiri.*

*Kerja mengatasi masalah masyarakat
adalah kerja mengatasi masalah diri
dan juga merupakan
ibadah yang direstui Tuhan.*

*Bishan Singh Bahadur,
Pengguna, Jilid 5 Bil 7, 1987*



Bishan Singh Yang Saya Kenali

Hj Ismail Nihat

Saya mula mengenali saudara Bishan Singh pada tahun 1979, apabila saya bertugas di Sekolah Menengah Sultan Abu Bakar, Kuantan. Waktu itu beliau adalah Guru Penyelia Petang di sekolah tersebut. Saya bertugas di bawah beliau ketika itu. Sebagai seorang guru dan juga ketua saya, saya amat kagum dengan prinsip perjuangan beliau terhadap masyarakat. Beliau mempunyai rasa prihatin yang sangat mendalam terhadap permasalahan yang dihadapi oleh masyarakat.



Bishan (paling kanan) dan Ismail Nihat (paling kiri) di Mesyuarat Agung Persatuan Pengguna Pahang, 23 Mac 1986



Y.B. En. Pandithan, Setiausaha Parlimen Kementerian Perdagangan dan Perindustrian diiringi oleh En. Bishan Singh, Presiden PAC bagi memulakan upacara Majlis Makan Malam PAC sempena Pengisytiharan Anugerah Jasabakti PAC dan Mesyuarat Agung ke-14nya, 27hb Mac 1988.

Ketika itu beliau telah bergiat cergas dalam Persatuan Pengguna Pahang (PAC). Beliaulah yang telah membawa saya masuk dan seterusnya terlibat secara aktif di dalam persatuan pengguna sebagai ahli jawatankuasa. Beliau adalah Presiden PAC pada masa itu. Beberapa tahun saya bersama-sama beliau menerajui Persatuan Pengguna Pahang, sehingga persatuan tersebut amat dikenali oleh masyarakat khususnya di Pahang. Beliau tanpa jemu-jemu memperjuangkan nasib pengguna di Pahang dengan mengendalikan sebarang aduan yang diterima daripada pengguna. Banyak program telah dijalankan demi mewar-warkan persatuan tersebut kepada umum. PAC juga telah diiktiraf oleh semua pihak sehingga ke peringkat istana. Ke bawah DYMM Sultan Pahang telah berkenan menjadi penabung PAC.

Apa yang tidak dapat saya lupakan ialah semangat beliau dalam memperjuangkan nasib pengguna. Pendidikan

pengguna menjadi agenda penting beliau. Banyak ceramah, pameran dan bengkel yang telah diadakan diseluruh negeri Pahang. Beberapa cawangan PAC juga telah ditubuhkan di kebanyakan daerah dalam negeri Pahang. Kesungguhan beliau dalam membantu pengguna yang menghadapi masalah telah mendorong beliau melibatkan diri dalam pergerakan pengguna di peringkat kebangsaan. Lantaran itu beliau membawa PAC untuk bergabung dengan FOMCA. Akhirnya beliau telah dilantik memimpin FOMCA sebagai Presiden. Atas minat beliau yang sangat mendalam dengan kerja-kerja badan sukarela (NGO), akhirnya beliau sanggup meninggalkan kerjaya guru sekalipun ini memberi kesan terhadap masa hadapan beliau. Beliau meletakkan jawatan sebagai guru walaupun hilang segala kemudahan sebagai kakitangan kerajaan.

Setelah berhenti sebagai guru, beliau bekerja sepenuh masa menguruskan kerja-kerja sukarela yang akhirnya telah berjaya membawa beliau melanjutkan pelajaran sehingga peringkat sarjana di Filipina. Selepas itu penglibatan beliau dalam pergerakan pengguna mencapai ke peringkat antarabangsa. Beliau telah memberi khidmat kepada Pertubuhan Makanan dan Pertanian (FAO) sebagai konsultan dalam beberapa program yang melibatkan pembangunan masyarakat desa di beberapa buah negara. Oleh kerana minatnya yang sangat mendalam, beliau selalu mengabaikan soal kesihatan beliau dalam usaha membantu masyarakat.

Selama hampir 20 tahun bersama-sama dengan beliau dalam pergerakan kepenggunaan, saya telah belajar

banyak perkara, khususnya dalam menghadapi pelbagai karehah dan birokrasi yang terpaksa dihadapi daripada berbagai-bagai pihak. Beliau sangat tidak berpuas hati terhadap sikap segelintir manusia yang diberi tanggungjawab tetapi tidak menjalankan tugas yang sepatutnya. Apatah lagi sehingga sanggup pula melakukan sesuatu yang menyebabkan orang lain menjadi mangsa atas kerakusan mereka.

Dalam memperjuangkan alam sekitar, beliau begitu prihatin sekali. Saat akhir hayat beliau, beliau masih meneruskan perjuangannya bagi memastikan Tasik Cini di Pahang tetap menjadi warisan sejarah yang mesti dilindungi. Program yang telah beliau lakukan bersama masyarakat asli di Tasik Cini bagi melindungi dan menjaga warisan negara terus dilaksanakan sehingga kini. Pada masa ini penduduk daripada masyarakat Orang Asli Tasik Cini telah menubuhkan persatuan untuk melindungi Tasik Cini daripada terus dieksploitasi oleh pihak yang tidak bertanggungjawab.

Setelah tidak lagi aktif dalam Persatuan Pengguna Pahang, beliau meneruskan perjuangannya melalui SUSDEN (*Sustainable Development Malaysia*) yang telah beliau sendiri tubuhkan. Salah satu usaha beliau melalui SUSDEN ialah aktiviti Sejahtera Kuantan Inisiatif (SKI), khas untuk penduduk Kuantan bagi menangani segala keperluan masyarakat Kuantan agar dapat hidup dalam sebuah bandar yang sejahtera.

Hasil dari inisiatif ini, lahirlah Persatuan Sejahtera Kuantan (PSK) yang beliau merupakan Yang Di Pertua



Ketua Pegawai Kewangan DiGi, Johan Denneilind memberikan anugerah 'Champion of Pahang's Lake Chini' kepada Bishan.



Tasik Chini

sehinggalah ke akhir hayat beliau. Saya juga menganggotai persatuan ini hingga sekarang untuk meneruskan perjuangan beliau. Satu pesanan yang saya masih ingat ketika empat bulan sebelum saya bersara ialah permintaan beliau agar saya dapat membantu persatuan

ini selepas persaraan saya. Tetapi beliau pergi lebih awal sebelum saya bersara. Sebab itulah selepas persaraan, saya terus bergiat dan menggerakkan PSK agar PSK menjadi satu wadah bagi warga Kuantan menentukan bandar kediaman mereka sebagai bandar yang sejahtera untuk didiami.

Saya berharap segala semangat dan perjuangan beliau akan terus kekal dihayati oleh generasi akan datang untuk memastikan kesejahteraan sejagat. Jasa dan sumbangan beliau akan tetap dikenang.

Hj Ismail Nihat adalah mantan Presiden NUTP (National Union of the Teaching Profession) dan bekas Setiausaha Kehormat Persatuan Pengguna Pahang.





Presiden PAC, En. Bishan Singh memperkenalkan ahli-ahli jawatankuasanya kepada Y.B. Datin Paduka Rafidah Aziz sebelum memulakan mesyuarat agung PAC.



Y.B. Datin Paduka Rafidah Aziz di majlis perasmian Mesyuarat Agung PAC ke-14. Duduk dengan beliau adalah pemimpin-pemimpin kanan PAC, Yeo Ah Chai, Timbalan Presiden, Bishan Singh, Presiden dan Ismail Nihat, Setiausaha Kehormat.



YAB Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Tun Razak, Menteri Besar Pahang sedang mengisi borang keahlian PAC.



Bishan Singh, President PAC menerima keahlian PAC daripada YAB Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Tun Razak

Remembering A Pioneer Social Activist And Dear Friend

Sarojeni Rengam

Like my mother used to say, *what you are is God's gift to you. What you do and become is your gift to God.*" Bishan Singh once shared these words of wisdom at the meeting of PAN AP's Steering Council. They were as much words of advice and encouragement to the younger staff of the organisation, as a profound note of solidarity and support to members long engaged in the struggle against pesticides towards a sustainable poison-free world.

Bishan's invaluable experience, knowledge, inputs to PAN AP's organisational and programmatic development and directions ranged from sustainable development issues to environmental conservation, and ecologically sound agriculture. He was instrumental in aiding the organisation's understanding on the issues of participatory action research (PAR) from a community perspective; community based livelihood and entrepreneurship development; and participatory management structures and operations. He also provided critical insights and

analysis on the current capital-centered mal-development trends.

He was very keenly involved in PAN AP's advocacy for Food Sovereignty, and staunchly upheld the need for grassroots empowerment and rights for self-determination in these matters.

And as PAN AP began developing its National Strategies framework, Bishan made tremendous contributions to PAN AP's growth in these areas, specifically assisting with our outreach to countries such as East Timor (Timor Leste) and Mongolia for which his vast past experience as a UN FAO consultant was invaluable. Urantsooj Gombosuren of the Centre for Human Rights and Development in Mongolia had tears in her eyes when we talked about Bishan's passing away. She related to me that Bishan was such an inspiration to the groups and the farmers in Mongolia who had attended his training sessions. They felt motivated and were looking forward to his continued involvement in their efforts to convert their fields into ecological agriculture. Now she says, "We are lost without him and have no idea of how to move this forward".

Bishan's leadership and insights on creative management and organisational development have informed the growth of the PAN AP secretariat and network. As a member of PAN AP's Steering Council (Board) and Management Committee, Bishan was a guiding light and inspiration for the organisation and actively involved himself in helping to set the direction, content and ethics of PAN AP's programmes, vision and mission.



PAN AP Training in Mongolia



Bishan with PAN AP Steering Council Members

For PAN AP, Bishan's integrity, principled and spiritual leadership was also a great influence and inspiration to us all. His passion and dedication to human, social and environmental justice was a part of his soul. His extraordinary sense of humour was a delight to all who knew him.

He was always giving of himself in countless ways.

On a personal note, I met Bishan when I first started working at the International Organisation of Consumers Unions (IOCU) and when he was with FOMCA. I remember we worked together on the MSG (monosodium glutamate) campaign and launched the campaign at the IOCU Congress in Bangkok in 1984. It was a resounding success and the consumer groups in Asia at the Congress aggressively campaigned against MSG. When FOMCA was



Bishan at a PAN AP workshop



Bishan in Mongolia

taken to court over actions related to its MSG campaign, I provided informational support for the court case and dug all the information on the health impacts of MSG for his use. Bishan fought very hard to prove that MSG was unnecessary in our diet and that it could potentially cause health problems especially in infants, and finally due to his tireless efforts, the legal suit was withdrawn.

The next campaign we worked together on was to get the principle of “Prior Informed Consent” included in FAO’s International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides. He was then the President of FOMCA and he lobbied the Malaysian delegates going to the FAO Conference in 1987 where the Code was discussed. When I met the Malaysian delegates in Rome at the conference all of them said that they knew the issue because Bishan

had briefed them. After massive debates and finally at the eleventh hour, the resolution on PIC's inclusion was unanimously adopted at the FAO Conference.

Just prior to setting up PAN AP as an independent entity from IOCU, I spoke to him and asked for his support to help build PAN AP into a strong network that would be effective. He readily agreed to be on our Steering Committee and on the Management Committee and until his death he was committed to his support for PAN AP's agenda and work.

On a lighter note, Bishan was always organizing yoga sessions during Steering Council meetings and at other PAN AP meetings. He conducted these sessions in a simple and easily understood way that many of us got inspired to continue yoga practice. Just a few months before he passed away, he came to Penang to conduct a half a day yoga session with some of us in PAN AP. That session has given me the impetus and the encouragement to continue my yoga exercises diligently for the last year and a half.

At one particular PAN AP meeting, he took the whole group of participants out of the meeting room and made us relax and see the energy sparkling in the air. It was quite an experience. At another meeting he made us all go out for a walk on the beach to enjoy the sunset.

In the last few years he was able to spend some time in my home and has stayed with us. During that time he shared his numerous experiences including his

experiences as a gardener. He has given us many good tips on landscaping the garden that my husband, Ravi has enthusiastically implemented. Now when I walk in my garden, I remember Bishan especially when I see some of the changes that he had suggested.

He will be profoundly missed by the PAN AP secretariat, our network partners for all his contributions, support and leadership. We will really miss him.

Sarojini V. Rengam is the Executive Director of PAN AP (Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific).

Bishan: Champion for the People and the Land

Seorang Aktivis Yang Bersemangat

Datuk Patrick Sindu

Saya amat terasa kehilangan seorang 'kawan baik' dan juga 'pemimpin' yang saya sifatkan sebagai seorang yang peramah dan mempunyai pengalaman luas dalam bidang kepenggunaan dan hak asasi manusia di Malaysia.

Saya amat berhutang budi dengan Bishan kerana beliau telah memberikan segala sokongan, nasihat dan tunjuk ajar kepada saya selama ini dan saya menganggap beliau sebagai 'mentor' yang tiada bandingannya.



Para peserta "Consumer Redressal and Legal Advisory Bureau Workshop" di Kuantan pada 5 hingga 6 Januari 1985. Datuk Patrick berada di barisan hadapan, yang kelima dari kiri.

Pernah seketika dahulu semasa pemerintahan Berjaya di Sabah, saya dan beliau telah dijemput untuk merasmikan satu majlis konvensyen kepenggunaan di mana kami dihina dan dikutuk oleh Ketua Menteri Sabah pada masa itu.

Saya bercadang untuk mengundur diri semenjak insiden itu berlaku. Namun beliau menasihati saya agar tidak berputus asa dan terus berusaha membantu para pengguna di Sabah kerana pengetahuan mereka masih lemah dalam isu kepenggunaan.

Saya tidak pernah melupakan kata-kata beliau yang selalu mengingatkan saya agar terus memperjuangkan nasib para pengguna khususnya di negeri Sabah. Sehingga ke saat ini, saya sendiri berani menyuarakan rintihan para pengguna yang tertindas tanpa berasa takut.

Sekali lagi, saya amat menghargai jasa semasa hayat beliau. Saya juga akan terus berusaha membantu para pengguna sepertimana yang telah dimulakan oleh beliau.

| *Datuk Patrick Sindu merupakan Presiden Persatuan Pengguna Sabah dan Wilayah Persekutuan Labuan.*

An Inspiring Consumer Leader

Chua Kim Tee

I had two 'shock-wave experiences' during my association with FOMCA. The first was when Bishan Singh suddenly tendered his resignation as President of FOMCA during an Exco meeting of FOMCA in 1988.

The second was when I received an SMS from the current FOMCA President, Datuk Marimuthu Nadason that Bishan had passed away.

I first met Bishan in 1982 when I was elected to represent Malacca Consumers Association in the FOMCA Executive Council. From then onwards our friendship developed as we fought together for many consumer concerns. Bishan Singh had sacrificed a lot for the protection of consumers in particular. For FOMCA it was more than that.

Bishan Singh resigned from the teaching profession without receiving any pension, which was a great sacrifice. From then onwards his first and most important duty was to see that FOMCA's activities ran smoothly and not on an ad-hoc basis.

PENGUNA APRIMEI, 1984.

Bishan has given up an 18 year career in teaching to become a fulltime consumerist.



Bishan Singh

Fomca president, Encik Bishan Singh has resigned from teaching to concentrate full-time on consumer activities.

With his resignation as a teacher, Bishan hopes to dedicate himself full-time to Fomca and the Pahang Consumers Association.

Bishan who is 40 now entered the teaching profession in 1961, after he passed out from Kuantan teacher training college.

Bishan said that this was the second-time he was quitting something that he liked for the cause of the consumer. Bishan said he opted out of being an active member of Gerakan Party when Fomca's constitution was changed in 1977 disallowing office-bearers from holding posts in political parties. Bishan was then at his peak in gerakan — he was the Chairman of the Gerakan Pahang and a central working committee member of the party.

Bishan hopes to spend his time now developing the Asean Consumer Information and Education Secretariat which would be based in Kuala Lumpur. Bishan's resignation might be a loss to the teaching service, but it's certainly a gain for consumerism.

Source: Pengguna April - Mei 1984



Consumer Week in Melaka

After my first shock, I often pondered what would become of FOMCA without Bishan Singh. When he resigned from FOMCA, I was then the Deputy President and there was no other alternative but to carry on and shoulder the responsibilities making sure that nothing would affect the work of FOMCA.

I was glad that the Exco gave me full support to soldier on as Acting President and in the next election I was elected unanimously as President of FOMCA for years 1989-1991.

Bishan Singh will be remembered as long as 'consumerism' exists. This is especially for those who love to protect CITIZENS' RIGHTS – those of us who are still in top-gear fighting for the rights of consumers.

Bishan Singh's many writings and other papers related to consumerism still remain very useful references.

I have lost a very close friend and I pray that all his work will remain useful and serve as a guide to all consumer activists.

Chua Kim Tee was the 4th President of FOMCA from 1989 - 1991



Perniagaan yang Menyeleweng

*Masyarakat perniagaan sedang bersidang;
Apa agendanya?*

— Bagaimana cara meningkatkan jualan.

*Pengerusi mesyuarat tamat ucapannya;
Apa maksudnya?*

— Pengguna adalah sasaran strategi mereka.

*Mereka bersetuju.
Bagi meningkatkan jualan,
perlu cari kelemahan pengguna.*

*Mereka bersetuju.
Bagi meningkatkan jualan,
kelemahan itu perlu dieksploitasikan.*

*Mereka bersetuju.
Bagi meningkatkan jualan,
teknik-teknik perlu dicari.*

*Adakah pengguna perlu barang itu?
Soalan itu tidak timbul,
dalam strategi peningkatan jualan.*

*Adakah pengguna mampu belinya?
Soalan itu juga tidak timbul,
dalam strategi peningkatan jualan.*

*Adakah pengguna akan berfaedah dengannya?
Soalan itu juga tidak timbul,
dalam strategi peningkatan jualan.*

*Apa yang penting dalam strateginya,
berapa banyak boleh dijual dengan apa cara jua
pun
asalkan dapat mencari keuntungan.*

Bishan Singh Bahadur, Pengguna, Jilid 5 Bil 9, 1987



Bishan and I

Datuk Marimuthu Nadason

Just over a year ago, I was in Brussels when told in a telephone call that Bishan Singh Bahadur was leaving us. I was shocked, but not surprised really, for about a month earlier, we had been informed by the family that Bishan's health was deteriorating rather fast.

Being so far away and learning that a true friend, no, to me, my mentor, was dead hurt real bad. I wished then that I could be in Kuantan, by his side as he breathed his last. There were so many thoughts that raced through my mind, making me more miserable.

And then I started to pray. I must be back in Malaysia, I prayed hard that I would be back in Malaysia in time to attend Bishan's funeral. That I must be able to do, please God, I prayed as I prepared to leave from Brussels to Zurich Airport.

Today, a year later, and asked to write this piece, I am at a loss. There are so many, many things to say. How can I do justice to the memory of a man who has done so, so

much for the consumer movement in Malaysia, one who has also had a great influence on me, and on my approach to work?

Bishan taught me so much that it is not possible to list them all down.

An old song that goes, *Where do I begin, to tell the story* by Andy Williams, comes to mind. It is from a hit movie *Love Story* that played in my primary school days.

It was in 1984 that we first met. I was nobody then, just an ordinary, founder member of the Consumers Association of Taiping (CAT).

It was at a seminar organised by the Perak Consumers Association (PCA). CAT had just been formed. Although



Bishan at CAT Office

they saw us as a competitor, nevertheless we were invited to their seminar. I came back impressed and excited, but only because this occasion was my first meeting with Bishan Singh. To me, a young person then so passionate about consumer rights about which I was just learning, Bishan appeared to be a friendly and honest person, and very clear about the direction he was taking, and ever so willing to share and teach. From there on, our friendship developed.

In those days CAT was not a member of FOMCA, but Bishan would invite me to all FOMCA programmes.

We did meet often, and I was grateful for that. Not to say that Bishan found me to be a great guy, but because the FOMCA newsletter, *Pengguna*, was printed in Taiping. Bishan would be in Taiping every month to check out the issue before it went to print, so naturally, he would call me whenever he came to town.

I was very impressed with his knowledge, awed by his experience. And thankful, for he was willing to teach, to appraise me about issues and the best means of tackling them. And I felt very honoured as well, for I was no office bearer or anyone of importance in the consumer movement. Which was also why, I felt, he could speak his mind with me even about the problems he faced.

One of the key issues that FOMCA took up in those early days, with the support of the CAT, was the move by the government to privatise healthcare. In fact, the first meeting on this matter was held in Taiping in 1987.

Then, there was the time when Bishan was sued over FOMCA's actions against MSG. The court in Seremban was hearing the matter and I would travel to Kuala Lumpur, stay overnight at the rather rundown FOMCA headquarters, which was then located at Jalan Pantai in KL, and then go on to Seremban the next day with FOMCA's lawyer, Ramdas Tikamdas.

I was a willing learner, believing that I could best serve my country and my fellow beings through the consumer movement. So I learned diligently from Bishan. A willing teacher, he taught me a lot about leadership and about organisational management.

And when he wanted to leave FOMCA, he spoke to me about it. In fact, I believe I was among the earliest in the consumer movement to learn about his intention to quit as FOMCA president.

In 1989, he left FOMCA. And for a few years before he took up a posting with the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation, he conducted two important programmes for NGOs. One was on Capacity building for NGOs, and the other, on alternative financing for NGOs.

The wonderful thing about Bishan, who quit his job as a teacher and gave up his government pension for consumer activism, is that he did a lot of training for NGOs, using funds that he raised himself.

And the energy he exhibited! He was always full of vigour and enthusiasm, and this I had the opportunity to



Left to right: Marimuthu Nadason (second), Bishan Singh (fourth) at a Workshop on Alternative Financing for NGOs.

experience up close, when I joined him in the training sessions for NGOs he conducted in Sabah and Sarawak.

He also made a serious attempt to form a Malaysian NGO Front, a loose network that would also serve as a training organisation for NGOs. However, this did not take off.

From being a prime mover of the consumer movement and the NGO movement as well, Bishan later in life went on to focus on environmental issues. He went around the country, trying to get NGOs to address sustainable agriculture as a matter of concern.

When he returned from his FAO posting in 2000, Bishan went full swing into agriculture. At this time, I was president of ERA Consumer, and farmers' issues were one of our big concerns.

We had the opportunity to work closely again. From 2001, we took up the matter of food security, an issue that ERA Consumer is very concerned with, till today.

Also in 2001, Bishan produced one of his best works, I dare say. This was on the “Direction of the Consumer Movement”. It was also from that year on that we made Bishan Advisor to ERA Consumer.



*In appreciation for a training session.
Datuk Marimuthu (left), Bishan (right)*

Bishan also taught me about nuisance factors, one of which was about how to handle people who just waste time at meetings. He also impressed upon me the importance of continuous education, which he showed in his own life. In his forties, he went to study for his Masters degree.

To be a leader in the consumer movement, he would say,

“you have to keep on studying, or events will overtake you”.

You have to continuously improve yourself in every sector, he would argue. Working with a non-profit organisation and having to pay for full-time staff to get jobs done means that you will always have to push yourself, not just to get the work done but also to raise the funds required.

Bishan would also write down his thoughts about issues and problems, or about things of consequence that came to his mind, on which he could reflect further later. Which was why he would have a pen and a notebook with him at all times.

He would share his knowledge with others, and at the same time, point it out to one and all that work is not everything; that home and family are just as important.

He would also speak of his mistakes, the blunders he had made, and what the younger leaders should do to be conscious of these, and how to avoid making them.

He also had a very high level of discipline and would meditate daily.

It was only from 1992 that I began to play a bigger role in the consumer movement at the national level. This was when I became an officer with FOMCA, its Deputy Secretary-General, in fact. This was three years after Bishan left FOMCA. He left in a huff, actually, unhappy and angry over the politicking involving certain individuals

in the Selangor Consumers Association.

His departure saddened me, but we continued to keep in touch. One point he would always make is that today's work in consumerism is about issues, and therefore, one must specialise.

In recent years, especially since 2004, there have been many changes in the NGO movement, in voluntary, non-profit bodies such as consumer bodies in particular. Bishan always kept abreast of such developments. Some of the basic rules the consumer movement of today must observe, Bishan then pointed out to us, are:

- Pay your staff well for a good job to be done;
- Remember always that volunteers cannot do the work paid staff will be committed to do;
- You must be able to handle academicians, and in some instances civil servants as well, who tend to be “gas bags”; and
- Don't pretend to know everything. This can be your downfall.

I took over as ERA president in 1997, and since then, I have adhered closely to Bishan's maxim of putting all work done into writing and publishing it as a source of information, not just for the government authorities we deal with, but also for academicians, researchers and students, locally as well as abroad.

It was in October of 2006 that we began to learn that Bishan did not have very long to live. He had been hospitalised a few times earlier in the year.

Three weeks before he died, Ramdas, his wife, then FOMCA secretary general Indrani Thuraisingham and I visited Bishan in Kuantan. He was reading a book when we arrived there, at the hospital. It was something about life after death.

Always the teacher, Bishan told me, “Keep on doing what you love to do ... you don’t have to compete with anybody, for the results will come, better and better, if you are committed to your work.” These are words I’ll never forget.

Weeks later, I was in Brussels when I heard that his condition was worsening. I flew back, through Zurich, while Indrani, who was also abroad, took her flight back from London. I had to see Bishan, whom I had grown to love, one whom I consider my mentor in the consumer movement.

It was raining heavily when we arrived in Kuala Lumpur. Thomas Iruthayam met us, Indrani and I, in Indrani’s fuel-guzzling car. We filled up and headed straight for Kuantan. Bishan had passed away while we were travelling back to KL, and if all went well, we could be there to see him off.

This was when miracles happened. Just 20km from Kuantan, the car stalled. We switched off the engine and prayed, and a few minutes later, it started again. Then, another 10km later, the same thing happened. The petrol

tank was empty. And what were we going to do, on the highway and in the rain?

We kept trying to restart the car, and kept on hoping. Thankfully the car started and took us another 10km, right in front of a petrol station, where we filled up and sped off to Bishan's house.

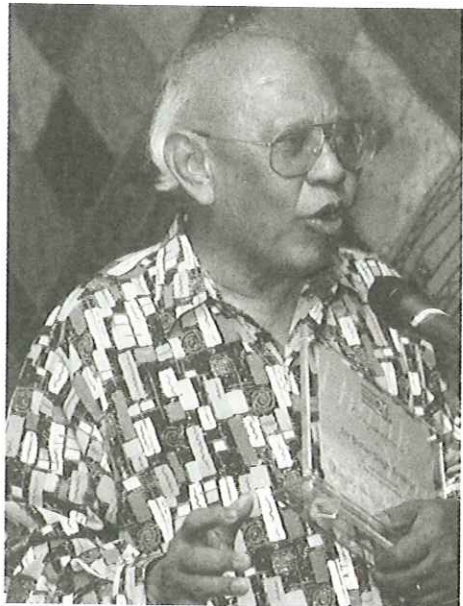
We reached the junction to his house just as the hearse was coming out, to head for the crematorium. Thank God! We were, by the grace of God, just in time to take part in the last rites for the man who I personally feel is Malaysia's greatest consumer activist.

Datuk Marimuthu Nadason is the President of FOMCA.



FOMCA's Presidents with the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad

Left to Right: Randhir Singh, Representative of Allahyarham Dato' Mohamed Sopiee Sheikh Ibrahim (1973 – 1974), Tara Singh Gill (1974 - 1981), Prof. Dato' Mohd Hamdan Hj Adnan (1991 - 2004), Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir Mohd, Bishan Singh Bahadur (1981-1988), Chua Kim Tee (1989 - 1991), Datuk Marimuthu Nadason (2004 - current)



Bishan receives
Award from ERA
Consumer 2006



Left to right: Bishan, Puan Norazian (Chairman, Consumer Claims Tribunal) and Datuk Marimuthu



Something sweet from a student to a mentor. Bishan Singh (right) and Datuk Marimuthu at ERA's 20th Anniversary Annual Dinner, 2006.

A Pioneer Consumer Activist

Yeoh Ah Chai and Tan Cheh Teng

Having worked with Mr. Bishan Singh Bahadur for 12 years since the late 1970s, we think he should be best remembered for his work in consumer education. Under the leadership of the late Mr. Bishan, the Pahang Association of Consumers (PAC) underwent a major overhaul in the 1980s. Being a teacher, he was able to bring many teachers as volunteers into the executive committee of the revitalised PAC from 1976 – 1996.

Bishan brought a new identity to PAC whose volunteers became ‘agents of change’. He was able to provide the necessary leadership and fresh ideas to strengthen PAC and turn it into a force to be reckoned with. The Consumer Education Programme, of which Yeoh Ah Chai was the chair, was an area in which PAC under Bishan’s leadership placed a lot of importance. Consumer education is the pre-requisite for promoting consumer rights.

PAC’s consumer education programmes were carried out in schools and communities. With the approval of the



A section of the participants discussing ideas for state campaigns during the National Youth Workshop on 16 & 17 March 1985.

Pahang Education Department, PAC was the first consumer group to set up consumer clubs in secondary schools in Pahang. Modules on activities relating to consumer issues, consumer protection, consumer rights and awareness were developed for consumer education activities. Through exhibitions, annual consumer club camps, seminars, workshops and talks on consumer issues, consumer education reached a wide range of people.

The late Mr. Bishan was known to have always included environmental issues in consumer education activities especially in schools in the main towns in Pahang like Kuantan, Bentong, Jerantut and Mentakab. PAC was able to produce a dossier for the International Year of the Child (1979) for consumer education programmes and this attracted the attention of IOCU, now known as Consumers

International and other international NGOs. Ms. Alma Williams who was IOCU's representative to UNESCO was sent to Pahang to assess the programmes.



Mr. Bishan Singh and Ms. Alma Williams of UNESCO

At the community level, PAC in its efforts to reach out to the local community, to get the participation of the other NGOs and to further create consumer awareness and bring consumer education to the grassroots, embarked on a programme called Rural Consumer Education. Through this effort, PAC was the first consumer association in Malaysia to set up branches in all districts in the state of Pahang.

Through this programme, PAC started by working with the FELDA scheme in Pahang. Women's participation in

consumer related programmes was encouraged. The branch committees were to incorporate members from the local women's groups, FELDA settler scheme representatives, NGOs, environmental groups, for example, Malaysian Nature Society and others. At the branch level, consumer education again was the most important issue. Talks, seminars, workshops were carried out almost every weekend in community halls of FELDA. Programmes to educate the settlers on consumer rights, basic consumer laws, environmental issues and others were also held. Pamphlets were produced for educating the consumers on hire-purchase, expiry date, consumer rights, know your medicines and others. In recognition of his efforts and the various programmes, the late Mr. Bishan was elected as the co-chair for the education committee of the IOCU.

Yeoh Ah Chai was a teacher and Deputy President of the Pahang Association of Consumers (PAC).

Tan Cheh Teng was a teacher and Council Member of FOMCA.

Bishan dalam Kenangan Saya

Ismail Abdul Aziz

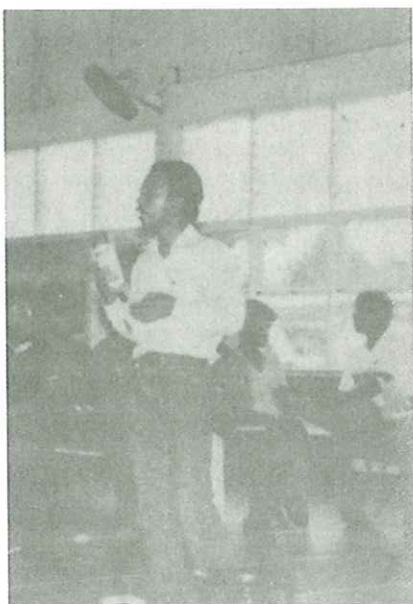
Saya mengenali Bishan pada tahun 1983, iaitu ketika beliau menjadi guru penyelia petang di Sekolah Menengah Abu Bakar, Kuantan. Saya mengenali beliau apabila diperkenalkan oleh Ustaz Ismail Nihat iaitu rakan sekerja beliau, yang juga merupakan rakan baik saya. Sebagai seorang guru ketika itu, beliau aktif dalam kerja-kerja sukarela khususnya dalam melaksanakan aktiviti kesedaran hak pengguna serta membantu menyelesaikan aduan-aduan pengguna dalam kalangan masyarakat khususnya penduduk di Bandar Kuantan.

Sebagai Presiden Persatuan Pengguna Pahang (PAC) ketika itu, beliau gigih dan lantang dalam menyuarakan masalah pengguna. Ini membuatkan saya semakin berminat untuk mengenali beliau dengan lebih dekat lagi. Bishan amat mudah didekati walaupun jarak usia saya dengan beliau agak jauh bezanya. Pada awal perkenalan kami, beliau banyak memberikan semangat dan dorongan supaya saya maju dalam bidang kerjaya di NGO serta bagaimana menjadi seorang pemimpin. Perhubungan kami semakin

rapat dan hampir setiap minggu saya mengikuti beliau melaksanakan aktiviti pengguna di Bandar Kuantan. Begitu juga ke daerah-daerah pedalaman lain di negeri Pahang seperti Taman Negara bagi menjalankan kajian alam sekitar untuk mengkaji impak daripada cadangan membangunkan Taman Negara sebagai sebuah empangan.

Pada akhir tahun 1984, Bishan telah menawarkan saya untuk bekerja sepenuh masa dengan Persatuan Pengguna Pahang (PAC). Beliau meminta saya meletakkan jawatan sebagai kakitangan kerajaan di Jabatan Pendidikan Pahang. Beliau juga mengatakan kepada saya jika saya meletakkan jawatan sebagai kakitangan kerajaan, beliau juga turut meletakkan jawatan sebagai seorang guru dan akan berkhidmat sepenuh masa di pejabat Persatuan Pengguna Pahang (PAC) semata-mata ingin membangunkan PAC.

Saya menerima tawaran jawatan sebagai Pegawai Pembangunan Cawangan PAC yang bertanggungjawab mewujudkan cawangan-cawangan PAC di peringkat daerah serta membangunkan cawangan-cawangan yang kurang aktif. Di sinilah bermulanya tunjuk ajar, semangat dan motivasi yang



Ismail Aziz sedang mengendalikan Permainan Kesedaran Pengguna semasa Bengkel Belia Nasional pada 16 & 17 Mac 1985.

beliau berikan kepada saya. Saya telah diberikan peluang sepenuhnya untuk melaksanakan aktiviti projek kepenggunaan. Saya telah diajar cara berceramah, menguruskan aduan pengguna, berinteraksi dengan pegawai-pegawai kerajaan serta pemimpin masyarakat setempat. Dengan adanya tunjuk ajar dan peluang-peluang secara berterusan daripada beliau, saya mempunyai keyakinan yang tinggi dan mampu melaksanakan tugas serta tanggungjawab yang diberikan oleh beliau.

Setiap hari kami bersama-sama berada di pejabat. Begitu juga selepas waktu pejabat. Pada hari Sabtu dan Ahad, saya bersama-sama beliau di rumahnya pula. Kami memasak dan makan bersama-sama. Ketika beliau memasak, beliau turut mengajar saya tentang resepi-resepi masakan kari tradisi masyarakat India yang menyelerakan. Saya mulai yakin dengan keikhlasan hatinya kerana beliau telah banyak berkongsi pengalaman peribadi dengan saya. Sikap kejujuran dan keikhlasannya amat saya kagumi dan saya mula yakin terhadap beliau yang benar-benar ingin memajukan diri saya. Beliau banyak memberi ruang dan peluang kepada saya dalam menyelaraskan aktiviti mahupun di peringkat kawasan, daerah hinggalah di peringkat negeri dan nasional.

Dalam usia yang masih muda ketika itu, iaitu berumur 25 tahun, saya telah diberi peluang untuk menjawat jawatan sebagai Penolong Setiausaha Kehormat Persatuan Pengguna Pahang (PAC). Pada tahun 1985, saya bersama-sama beliau berusaha membangunkan cawangan-

cawangan PAC hingga ke kawasan-kawasan FELDA di seluruh negeri Pahang. Seawal 4.30 pagi setiap hari Sabtu dan Ahad, kami telah bertolak dari rumah untuk pergi ke kawasan FELDA bagi menyampaikan ceramah pendidikan pengguna yang telah diatur serta diundang oleh penganjur. Kebanyakan peserta terdiri daripada golongan wanita yang amat tertarik dengan ceramah disampaikan oleh Bishan kerana beliau pandai berjenaka.

Saya masih ingat lagi, pada suatu ketika, disebabkan keletihan, kereta yang dipandu oleh beliau telah terbabas selepas melalui Jambatan Temerloh kerana mengelakkan sebuah lori yang datang dari arah hadapan, yang termakan jalan. Alhamdulillah, umur kami panjang dan Tuhan melindungi kami. Kami hanya menerima kecederaan ringan.

Bishan bukan sahaja aktif dalam menyampaikan ceramah-ceramah pengguna, malah beliau banyak mewujudkan idea-idea baru yang bernas yang direkannya sendiri hasil daripada pembacaan dan pembelajarannya dalam bidang kepenggunaan dari negara-negara maju. Pada tahun 1985, beliau telah berkongsi idea dengan saya mengenai kaedah untuk menghapuskan peranan orang tengah yang mengaut keuntungan berlebihan daripada petani yang berniaga di pasar-pasar minggu.

Beliau mula menyediakan kertas kerja dan meminta saya membantu beliau melaksanakan kajian di pasar-pasar minggu sekitar daerah Kuantan serta menemubual penjual di pasar minggu. Hasil kajian dan perkongsian idea tersebut, kami telah mewujudkan satu kertas kerja

lengkap untuk mewujudkan Pasar Tani* yang mana penjual di Pasar Tani hendaklah terdiri daripada petani kecil sendiri dan bukannya orang tengah. Idea dan kertas kerja ini telah dimajukan kepada Yang Berhormat Goh Cheng Taik, Timbalan Menteri Pertanian. Kemudiannya beliau telah melancarkannya sebagai satu projek nasional Kementerian Pertanian di Johor. Inilah kepuasan kami kerana projek kajian kami berjaya mendapat perhatian Kementerian Pertanian, walaupun idea kami dicuri oleh pihak kementerian yang 'mendapat nama' hasil titik peluh



Melalui pasar tani, satu Sistem Pasaran yang lebih adil dapat diwujudkan



**Pasar tani merujuk kepada sistem pemasaran pertanian tempatan, seperti sayur-sayuran, ikan serta daging haiwan. Ia merupakan tempat bagi para petani kecil menjual hasil keluaran mereka terus kepada orang ramai tanpa melalui orang tengah atau pemborong. Oleh itu, harga barangan yang dijual di Pasar Tani akan lebih murah berbanding dengan harga di pasar biasa. Pasar Tani biasanya diadakan pada hari minggu. Di Malaysia, idea penubuhan Pasar Tani mula-mula digagaskan oleh Bishan Singh, Presiden Persatuan Pengguna Pahang. Idea ini dikemukakan kepada Kementerian Pertanian pada tahun 1980-an. Konsep ini juga bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pendapatan para petani kecil.*

kami menjalankan kajian dan menyediakan kertas kerja projek ini.

Pada awal tahun 1986, saya bersama-sama Bishan telah berkhidmat sepenuh masa di FOMCA. Selaku Presiden FOMCA ketika itu, beliau juga memegang jawatan sebagai Pengarah Eksekutif, manakala saya dilantik sebagai Pegawai Pembangunan FOMCA yang bertanggungjawab untuk membangunkan sekretariat FOMCA dan ahli-ahli gabungan FOMCA di peringkat negeri. Ketika itu FOMCA menghadapi masalah kesempitan wang untuk menjalankan aktivitinya dan membayar gaji kakitangannya termasuk beliau dan saya. Keadaan FOMCA ketika itu ibarat 'kais pagi makan pagi' untuk mengumpulkan gaji bulanan.



Bishan gigih menjual Majalah Pengguna di mana sahaja beliau memberikan ceramah.

Bagi mendapatkan sumber kewangan, beliau mula menulis dan menerbitkan majalah pengguna. Idea konsep kepenggunaan dan ilustrasi yang dilakarkannya di dalam majalah Pengguna menjadi bahan penting pendidikan kepenggunaan yang bermanfaat sehingga ke hari ini. Beliau turut mengajar saya bagaimana untuk menyediakan berita serta fokus dan isu yang boleh menarik perhatian pembacanya.



Ahli-ahli PAC sedang mengambil contoh air dari Sungai Merba, di Pekan, Pahang. Kelihatan En. Bishan (duduk)

Beliau telah meminta saya mengaturkan aktiviti ceramah di universiti dan sekolah, pertubuhan-pertubuhan serta semua ahli gabungan semata-mata untuk menjual majalah pengguna. Selain itu, FOMCA yang sering diundang untuk menyampaikan kertas kerja di seminar-seminar, telah dijadikan sebagai kesempatan untuk kami menjual majalah. Malahan setiap minggu kami akan membuat jualan terus di perhentian bas, dan premis seperti pejabat-pejabat kerajaan dan bank. Saya masih ingat apabila kami terpaksa tidur di pejabat FOMCA di Jalan Pantai Baru selama 5 bulan untuk menyiapkan majalah dan tugas-tugas lain.

Ketegasan dan kelantangan beliau dalam menegakkan sesuatu isu pengguna menyebabkan beliau kadangkala tidak disukai oleh sesetengah pegawai di peringkat Kementerian Perdagangan yang merasakan tugas mereka telah dicabar dan kelemahan mereka didedahkan kerana gagal melindungi pengguna. Keadaan ini sehingga menyebabkan Menteriya ketika itu mengarahkan pegawai kementerian mengadakan mesyuarat tergepar dan menjemput Bishan selaku wakil dari FOMCA dalam mesyuarat-mesyuarat Kementerian. Hasil daripada idea beliau, telah diwujudkan Jawatankuasa-jawatankuasa Khas Pengguna di peringkat kementerian yang beliau turut dilantik sebagai ahli dalam beberapa jawatankuasa berkenaan.

Bishan juga gigih dalam melaksanakan kempen-kempen di peringkat nasional seperti Kempen Anti MSG pada tahun 1989, sehingga menyebabkan beliau menerima tekanan daripada syarikat pengeluar produk MSG. Tekanan ini berlarutan sehingga membawa ke mahkamah. Kejadian ini menimbulkan nostalgia kepada saya apabila kami pernah berselisih faham selama setahun kerana menegakkan isu MSG, di samping ada unsur-unsur kepentingan diri dalam kalangan pemimpin persatuan pengguna negeri dan ahli exco FOMCA yang bekerjasama dengan syarikat yang mengeluarkan MSG ketika itu.

Beliau bukan sahaja sebagai seorang pemimpin NGO yang gigih dan mengamalkan cara hidup yang sederhana, malah beliau mempunyai prinsip diri yang tinggi dan tidak mudah untuk dibeli oleh sesiapa. Kata-kata hikmahnya banyak

memberikan pengajaran kepada saya kerana mengandungi makna yang tersirat. Ada di antaranya yang masih kekal dalam ingatan saya sehingga hari ini, seperti kata-kata dalam bahasa Inggeris *“There are five types of people. Firstly, people who make things happen. Secondly, people who wait for something to happen. Thirdly, people who always talk about what is happening. Fourthly, people who are afraid of what is happening and lastly, people who don’t know what is happening.”*

Ismail Abdul Aziz merupakan Timbalan Setiausaha Agung Persatuan Pendidikan dan Penyelidikan untuk Pengguna Malaysia (ERA Consumers Malaysia)



“Dengan Dukacita Dimaklumkan”

*Tapak kasut sudah haus,
jalan kerana cari kerja.
Dakwat pena hampir kering,
Suara sudah jadi kasar,
menghadiri temuduga kerja.*

*Hasil semuanya adalah jawapan:
“Dengan dukacita dimaklumkan...”*

Salah siapa saya menganggur?

*Saya mematuhi segala kehendak,
ibu, bapa, guru dan pemimpin.
Saya belajar tekun dan rajin,
dapat ijazah dengan kepujian.
Saya ingin dan sanggup bekerja,
tanpa kira jenis atau pangkat.*

*Hasil jawapannya masih:
“Dengan dukacita dimaklumkan...”*





Salah siapa saya menganggur?

*Memohon kerja setimpal kelulusan,
tidak ada jawatan kosong.
Memohon kerja sebagai kuli,
kelulusan adalah terlalu tinggi.
Kelulusan ada, tidak ada kerja.
Kelulusan tinggi, tidak dapat kerja.*

*Hasil jawapannya masih:
"Dengan dukacita dimaklumkan..."*

Salah siapa saya menganggur?

*Bukan kerana kemelesetan ekonomi,
itu hanya satu alasan.
Pengangguran adalah petanda:
— kegagalan sistem politik,
— kegagalan sistem ekonomi,
— kegagalan kepimpinan manusia,
menjaga kesejahteraan manusia.*

*Itulah hasil pengalaman saya:
"Dengan dukacita dimaklumkan"*

Bishan Singh Bahadur, Pengguna, Jilid 5 Bil 8, 1987





Presiden FOMCA En. Bishan Singh menerangkan tentang Tabung Pembangunan FOMCA.



Exco FOMCA. Setiausaha En. Hamdan Adnan sedang membentangkan minit mesyuarat.

My Encounter with Bishan

Dato' Indrani Thuraisingham

The first time I met Bishan was in mid 2000. Since my involvement in the consumer movement in 1995, my contact with Bishan was limited to reading about Bishan's work and contributions towards the movement in the 1980s and ad hoc recollections about him now and then by my colleague, Datuk Marimuthu, President of ERA. I was the Hon. Secretary of ERA CONSUMER, an NGO that works towards empowering community, when ERA was entrusted to carry out a household survey of villages in Malaysia that would show the inter-relationship of the fundamental factors affecting food security at the household and community levels. This was a 200 village study across 10 Asian countries. One of the key objectives of the project was to enable grassroots communities to participate effectively in identifying food related problems, plan actions and monitor the progress collectively at the community levels using participatory techniques.

Being a novice in this area of participatory appraisal systems, I discussed with my colleague on how we should

go about it. Marimuthu mentioned that Bishan had recently returned from his stint in FAO, Bangkok, working on participatory farming systems and he would be a good resource person to assist us in carrying out this project.

And so he was. He was not only a good resource person who helped us to carry out that particular project, but he subsequently went on to guide us in carrying out various other projects and activities. He guided, motivated and even cajoled us to plan and implement activities which he felt would benefit the communities (even when we lacked sufficient funds to carry out those activities). Every time we met him (even if it was for a social dinner), he was forever ready with his ideas and project proposals, all saved up in his trusted laptop for a project that would benefit consumers or a vulnerable community that needed assistance.

I came to the consumer movement armed only with my degree in Law. I had no specific skill or training. I even learned my typewriting skills and usage of computer when I joined the consumer movement in 1995. Bishan soon became a father figure in my life after his involvement in ERA's project in 2000. I used to call him when I had a work-related problem. He would talk about how he would have addressed the particular problem of consumers those days, what lessons he had learnt, and how I should go about it.

So, how would I describe Bishan? In one word, a "teacher". He was a talented and remarkable teacher. Every time I

met him, Bishan taught and introduced to me something; concepts such as “people-centered development model” , “value for people and environment”, “transformation for change” , “sustainability” were concepts that I learnt from him. It was through him, I began acquainting myself with the writings of David Korten, Peter Drucker, Alvin Toffler and others.

And he touched not only my life, but many others in ERA; the interns who came for their practical training to ERA for a 3-month cycle and other full-time staff in ERA all learnt about team work, how to conduct research, how to manage time etc. He was willing to take time off to come to ERA to teach anyone who wanted to learn ... for free ...and a good cup of coffee, of course...

This trait of his was something admirable and to be appreciated in this day and age, when people are so busy chasing their own pot of gold that no one stops for anyone anymore, here was a man who was willing to teach and guide others for the sake of a better world.

When I heard he was unwell and had been in and out of the hospital, Datuk Marimuthu, Ramdas and I drove down to Kuantan to see him. He looked frail but spirited, with a zest for life and still reading motivational books.

I'm really glad that I made the trip. It was the last time I saw him alive. The next news I received in November 2006 while in London attending a consumer related meeting was that he had passed away. I truly wanted to be there at

his funeral, to show him how much he was appreciated. I purchased a new ticket and flew down immediately from London to Kuala Lumpur and drove down immediately to Kuantan. I was in time to join in the last rites at the crematorium.

I will miss himthe consumer movement has lost a visionary.

Dato' Indrani Thuraisingham is Head of the Consumers International (CI) Asia Pacific office.

Kenangan Bersama Bishan Singh

Mohd Yusof Abdul Rahman

Saya mula mengenali Bishan Singh sekitar tahun 1992, ketika saya bertugas di FOMCA sebagai Pegawai Penerbitan. Pada peringkat awal bertugas di FOMCA, saya sering mendengar dan membaca tentang Bishan Singh melalui beberapa dokumen tentang FOMCA, namun tidak berkesempatan untuk bertemu dengannya.

Pada satu hari beliau dan beberapa orang rakannya telah datang ke pejabat FOMCA di Pantai Baru. Pada waktu tengah hari, ketika ingin makan tengah hari di gerai yang berhampiran, hujan turun dengan lebatnya. Kami terpaksa berkongsi payung, termasuklah saya berkongsi satu payung dengannya. Beliau begitu mesra walaupun itulah kali pertama bertemu.

Sejak itu, saya sering berjumpa dengan beliau dalam beberapa seminar dan bengkel yang dianjurkan oleh FOMCA. Beliau sering dijemput untuk memberikan ceramah dalam seminar dan bengkel yang diadakan itu. Melaluinya, saya dapat melihat betapa Bishan seorang yang sangat berilmu dalam bidang kepenggunaan dan

begitu bersemangat dalam menyampaikan ceramahnya.

Berdasarkan penelitian saya melalui beberapa dokumen yang terdapat di pejabat FOMCA, saya mendapati Bishan merupakan seorang pemikir dan perancang. Terdapat beberapa dokumen tentang Pelan Bertindak FOMCA selama 5 tahun dan 10 tahun yang telah digarap oleh Bishan. Perancangan yang dibuat itu begitu menyeluruh tentang hala tuju FOMCA dalam tempoh tersebut.

Saya juga begitu mengagumi usaha Bishan menerbitkan majalah Pengguna, yang saya telah warisi apabila memegang jawatan sebagai Pegawai Penerbitan. Banyak maklumat yang saya sendiri telah ambil dari 'Majalah Pengguna' tersebut, dalam penerbitan yang saya kendalikan itu.

Satu lagi yang menarik perhatian saya terhadap Bishan ialah kemampuan beliau menarik beberapa orang untuk terlibat dengannya dalam pergerakan pengguna, seperti Ramdas Tikamdas, Ismail Aziz dan sebagainya. Ini menunjukkan Bishan seorang yang mempunyai kemahiran dalam menambat hati seseorang untuk terlibat bersama-sama dengan beliau.

Mohd Yusof Abdul Rahman adalah Presiden Persatuan Pengguna Selangor dan Wilayah Persekutuan dan Bendahari Agung / Pengarah Komunikasi, FOMCA.

Some Memories of Bishan

Gurmit Singh

I first met Bishan when he was President of FOMCA in the early 80s. He was often complaining about how difficult it was to run FOMCA as a federation compared to the Pahang Association of Consumers which he concurrently headed. If I am not mistaken, he was still teaching as well then. I was at that time Environmental Protection Society of Malaysia (EPSM) and Selangor Graduates Society (SGS) President and quite active in pushing public discussion on major environmental and human rights issues.

Over the years we ran into each other at seminars, meetings and some joint campaigns. After his FOMCA stint, Bishan founded the Management Institute for Social Change (MINSOC) and later Sustainable Development Network (SUSDEN), through which he worked on a range of environmental issues. In the run-up to the Rio Summit, we shared a room in Paris during the NGO Conference convened by the then French President. We tried during this meeting to get others to support a resolution calling

for reparations from the OECD countries to the Third World for all the historical looting of resources that had occurred in the past. But there was just not enough support for this move.

There was a period of a few years when Bishan disappeared from the Malaysian NGO scene – first doing his Masters in Manila, then working with the FAO in Bangkok, and finally undertaking various consultancies for FAO in a number of Asian countries. Around this time he started pushing the concept of social harmony and entrepreneurship.

I had the occasion to visit his house in Kuantan a number of times and on almost all these occasions, he made it a point to show me all the herbs, vegetables and even fruit trees that he and his wife were growing organically, as far as possible. The house, a single storey bungalow, was kept cool by the shady trees around it.

We ran a couple of joint activities in Kuantan, when Bishan undertook the task of getting local participants. These were done in the late 90s and early 2000s and focused mainly on energy and climate issues. We were also in the coordinating committee of the informal network Forum 21. My last contact with Bishan was the MENGO AGM in 2006 where he was elected to chair the Coordinating Committee.

I found Bishan to be enthusiastic and hardworking about the issues that he was committed to and the organizations that he led. Although we did not always see eye to eye on a

range of issues and approaches, we generally got along well, despite the occasional hiccups. He often described the NGOs that he led as the 'good ones' and that they needed 'the bad ones' led by me to appear good, especially in the eyes of the government. Did not make me exactly happy!

Another area that he developed an interest in during the 2000s was the publishing of a development magazine for Malay women. *Penita* was edited by his daughter Sunita, but Bishan was the one who did the financial plan and the funding scheme to run it on a sustainable way. The future of *Penita* would be testimony to Bishan's contribution (as well as the efforts of Sunita and her team).

Now that Bishan has left this world, may his soul rest in peace and the ideas that he advocated be taken up and developed by others.

| Gurmit Singh is Chairman of CETDEM (Centre for Environment, Technology and Development Malaysia)

Sustainable Kuantan Initiative (SKI) - Leaders of various non-governmental organisations set up this network, following the Earth Summit in 1992. The network focuses on the need for sustainable development to be more people-oriented and to get the communities to participate in development. To facilitate this, SUSDEN set up the Sustainable Kuantan Initiative (SKI) two years later. Through this initiative, the community set up an association (Persatuan Sejahtera Kuantan) to work closely with the Kuantan Municipal Council. Sustainable Kuantan Initiative (SKI), as such is a pilot project of SUSDEN to facilitate community participation in local governance and promote sustainable development. The SKI's plan of action includes establishing a Consultative Citizens' Council to help in the formulation of appropriate development policies for the municipality and undertaking activities to green Kuantan to promote sustainable urban agriculture. SKI has now become SUSDEN's model for sustainable urban management initiatives, and the network has recently completed drawing up a three-year programme to replicate the SKI experience in six more municipalities in Malaysia. There was also a need to empower women in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to enable more effective communication and collaboration between rural and urban women.

Bishan at Lunchtime

Rash Behari Bhattacharjee

The Bishan I knew was a man driven by the simple idea that we must do our personal best to make a difference. I used to have his company when he came occasionally to the International Organization of Consumers Unions (IOCU, now Consumers International) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, which was based in Penang then. Bishan was co-Chair of the IOCU Standing Committee on Consumer Education and would drop in to coordinate the consumer education work from time to time. At lunchtime, he would join the staff of the IOCU Penang office, where I was the publications officer from 1988 to 1991, and in the relaxed setting of the colonial era bungalow that was our base, he would share his many stories that spoke volumes about the principles that guided his life.

Bishan's early life was hard, by his own account, and he had to work after school to supplement the family income. One job was to pick the ears of baby corn from a neighbouring farmer's land so that those which were left



Bishan sharing his many stories

on the plants would mature faster. For that, he was paid a child labourer's wage of 50 cents an hour, if I remember correctly. The baby corn that was plucked would be thrown away, or fed to the poultry perhaps. Bishan marvelled that in later years, that corn would be packaged and sold for a premium in supermarkets. For him, it was an example of the increasing monetarisation of society today.

At another time, he worked as a lorry driver's attendant while still a young boy, and he remembered that on a drive along the country roads, they came across some rambutan trees laden with fruits that were ripe for the picking. Bishan and his employer ate their fill of the juicy fruits, but the villager who owned the trees would not take any money for what they ate, as they were her guests. If they wanted to take away some fruits, however, she would accept payment. For Bishan, this was a reflection of the community values that guided rural society, which were a priceless heritage of an agrarian life.

Bishan's indigent circumstances in his young life shaped his outlook strongly, and was reflected in his attention to prudent expenditure of public funds. As a member of the Kuantan Municipal Council, he said, he would query the council's gardeners if they asked for replacement sickles too frequently. Having been on the ground from an early age, he knew that some workers would spend hours sharpening down their tools in the shade instead of doing their allotted tasks.

It is no exaggeration to say that Bishan was indefatigable in the public cause, and would make endless trips to the rural areas to spread the message of consumer awareness. As a result, when he was president of the Pahang Consumers Association, he could boast of having the largest enrolment in a consumer organisation in Malaysia. Bishan was a people organiser through and through, and this was evident in the conviction and emphasis with which he spoke about citizen action and civil rights.

For social activists frazzled by the pressures of their work, Bishan had a simple prescription – meditation, which he said was part of his morning routine. That may have been the secret of his cheerful disposition and ready chuckle that endeared him to his fellow activists and friends at large.

| *Rash Behari Bhattacharjee is the Associate Editor of the Sun paper*



Hakikat Hidup

*Ya Tuhan, Engkau kurniakan
Dunia,
Alamnya untuk menanggung kehidupan:*

**umat manusia
*nyawa makhluk
*dan hutan rimba,
semuanya disusun
saling bantu membantu
menjamin hidup berharmoni.
Ya Tuhan, Engkau turunkan
Agama
ajaran-ajarannya bagi mengikis:
*nafsu kebendaan
*sifat tamak
*dan hidup membazir,
supaya kurniaan
dunia dan alam
dinikmati tanpa dimusnah*

*Ya Tuhan, manusia merancang
Ekonomi*

Prinsip-prinsip bagi memaju:

**nafsu kebendaan
*sifat tamak
*dan hidup membazir
supaya ekonomi*

*atas alasan pembangunan
mencari keuntungan.*

*Ya Tuhan, manusia inginkan
Pembangunan.*

Atas nama kemajuan bagi memusnahkan

**akhlak manusia
*nyawa makhluk
*dan alam dunia,
semuanya kerana
mencari kehidupan kaya-raya
dan senang-lenang*

Bishan Singh Bahadur, Pengguna, Jilid 5 Bil 6, 1987



A True People's Activist

Josie M Fernandez



It was *hanami* (cherry blossom viewing) season in Japan. Pink and white cherry blossoms were everywhere.

It was spring 1983 in Japan. Consumer leaders and activists were gathered from around the globe in scenic Ranzan for a consumer seminar organized by IOCU (now CI). It was here, that I first met Bishan Singh Bahadur, who was then the President of FOMCA. That meeting propelled me to national consumer activism. Bishan convinced me that it was not enough to do consumer

education at the school level. I needed to do more (I was then a school teacher like Bishan, a life member of SCA, networking with IOCU and CAP).

By 1984, I was Deputy Secretary General of FOMCA, working on its consumer education and health programmes. Bishan was a tireless campaigner and passionate about the consumer concerns of ordinary people.

I saw another side of Bishan too. He took on tasks that few Presidents of a national organization would ever attempt. He cleaned the office and its toilets as well. He believed that honest work was not beneath human dignity. He brushed aside the suggestion to engage a part-time cleaner for the FOMCA office since the national body was run on a shoe-string budget.

Bishan transformed FOMCA. I remember his five-year development plans, campaigns against junk food, irrational use of medicines, infant formula and wasteful habits. However, I believed that FOMCA could do more in the field of consumer research but Bishan explained that FOMCA affiliates needed to be strengthened before the Federation embarked on activism driven by research.

In 1986, I left FOMCA to found the ERA Consumers in Perak much to the chagrin of FOMCA. (It was FOMCA's policy then, that each state would have only one consumer organization.)

I thought it would be parting of the ways with Bishan. After a 'cooling off period', Bishan accepted invitations to ERA's seminars and activities. He was always willing to share his ideas and insights on programmes and projects which we at ERA appreciated. In 1988, after Bishan bade farewell to the Presidency of FOMCA, he engaged even more actively with ERA. The efforts of Bishan included bringing Canadian volunteers to the organization through the Crossroads programmes to serve in Malaysia. ERA was fortunate to receive several volunteers from the programme through Bishan.

A nationalist to the core, Bishan placed the interests of the nation at the top of the consumer agenda. In 1987, the US soya bean lobby launched a negative campaign against Malaysia's palm oil. On Oct 27, 1987, Bishan, as President of FOMCA, Dato' Anwar Fazal, Regional Director of IOCU Asia Pacific, and myself as President of ERA met with Datuk Seri Dr. Lim Kheng Yaik (then Minister of Primary Industries) to share our views on how consumer groups could help Malaysia fight the US soya bean producers campaign against palm oil. However we soon realized that it was the wrong day for this meeting – *Operasi Lalang* was launched. Our concerns were for friends, activists, politicians who were arrested.

Bishan built people. He believed that NGO leaders and staff should constantly develop their capacity and skills. In 1990, Bishan who was pursuing his Masters at the Asian Institute of Management in Manila, convinced me that I should too pursue my Masters in Development

Management. I am ever grateful to Bishan for the efforts he made in arranging the interviews and ensuring that I sat for the entrance exams. Bishan never gave up.

In the 1990s, Bishan bade farewell, albeit temporarily, to the consumer movement to join the UNDP Farmer-Centred Agricultural Resource Management (FARM) Programme implemented by FAO. He always believed in the empowerment of people. Through the Farm programme, Bishan played a key role in a paradigm shift for the transformation in rural development and farmer-empowerment in Asia.

When I was Regional Director of CIROAP, I was more than happy to invite Bishan to share his Farm experience at an international conference on Food Security in Penang in 1999. Bishan's insights into farmer empowerment from his experiences in the Farm project are most valuable for development practitioners.

Bishan was a great teacher, trainer, storyteller and an advocate for liberating the poor from unjust economic and political systems. Bishan and I received recognition for our services to ERA Consumer at its 20th anniversary dinner in September 2006. A sign that he was ailing showed when his daughter Sunita urged him to leave soon after the ceremony as he was not feeling too well. But he seemed reluctant to say his goodbyes for the evening, returning to the tables where his friends from the consumer movement were seated.

He was plucked too early from family, friends and from this earth – all of which he loved. He had so much more to give and to do. That's how I felt when I paid my last respects to him in Kuantan on Nov 30th 2006.

I hope the young consumer leaders of today will emulate the work of Bishan, whose heart was for people and Mother Earth.

Bishan had a gift of turning ordinary events and experiences into stories with important lessons. Here is one that I have often used in consumer education activities.

“One very early morning, I was traveling from Kuantan to Kuala Lumpur when I decided to stop at a small village shop to buy some breakfast. I noticed a woman approach the shopkeeper with some eggs in a plastic bag. A transaction took place. The shopkeeper gave the woman some money apparently for the eggs. I decided to find out why the woman was trading eggs from free range (kampong) chickens for some cash. The woman said that her school-going daughter needed the money to buy Vitagen as the teacher had informed the students that the Vitagen salesman would be coming to the school that day. I was taken aback. I explained to the woman that the free-range eggs were much more nutritious than a commercial drink. I spoke to her about feeding her children with natural wholesome

Bishan: Champion for the People and the Land

*food, particularly those grown in her compound.
How wasteful consumption has crept into our
villages through our education system!"*

-Bishan Singh-

Josie M Fernandez is an Asian Public Intellectual Fellow. She is the Director of the Centre for the Advancement of Philanthropy and a consultant to FOMCA.

An Uncommon Man With A Common Touch

Joe Selvaretnam

I first met Bishan Singh at the office of IOCU (now CI) then in Penang in 1984. I had just returned from the UK following my studies and was working with IOCU. He was very committed to consumerism and was building a team to spearhead his consumer work in Kuala Lumpur where he was the President of the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (FOMCA).

I was coaxed by him to come and work with him for the challenge of becoming involved with national level consumerism and thereafter started a 7 year journey to work with Bishan. He was a good teacher, mentor and savvy “consumer politician”. He had a vision for consumerism and knew how to position it in the hearts and minds of government agencies and also the media. He had good support from IOCU whose President then was Anwar Fazal, also a Malaysian. Anwar also headed the regional headquarters (HQ) based in Penang and keen to support and help build up the capacity of both FOMCA and the state consumer bodies to create critical awareness of consumerism in Malaysia.

The early days were challenging. FOMCA was in a modest office in Jalan Pantai Baru. Bishan built up a small team of full-time staffers. He himself had left his teaching job to go fulltime. This was like the Nader Raiders of Malaysia - a growing consumer advocacy countervailing the business hucksters who have had a field day largely unfettered.

Times were sometimes very bad in terms of funding. FOMCA was high on ambition and low on funds. Bishan worked tirelessly to develop project proposals for funders to support and soon the project funds started coming in. The humble beginnings allowed us to sharpen our resolve to work harder and develop a deep appreciation of the challenges ahead of us. Little by little, under the leadership of Bishan and the many “behind the scenes” heroes, we built up the agenda of consumerism and the organizational strength to maintain this, promote and publicise the concepts in consumerism.

In the area of advocacy, FOMCA had been instrumental in advocating the Small Claims Court and had several consumer leaders in the National Consumer Tribunal, among others.

In the years since FOMCA has built up a good branding for consumerism. We had a widening group of local activists who were contributing to the advocacy and programme activities. People like Prof. Rokiah Talib, Prof. Sothi Rachagan, Josie Fernandez, Ramdas Tikamdass and Prof. Hamdan Adnan, to name just a few, were emerging as important contributors to the consumer cause.

I am very grateful for the valuable insights I have gained working with Bishan. I left FOMCA in 1990 to return to UK to study Law. Bishan had also just left FOMCA the previous year to pursue his work in sustainable development and environment.

He was an important catalyst for consumerism as he helped to brand consumerism in the public conscience. He was a practising consumerist and that's a rare breed. Bishan's legacy has been that he believed and lived as he preached. Thank you Bishan.

| *Joe Selvaretnam was a former programme officer of FOMCA. He now resides in Australia.*



Pendidikan Pengguna

*Belum bulan habis,
Kocekku sudah kosong,
Pendapatan yang lumayan,
habis dibelanja, entah ke mana.*

*Perlu kuberhutang lagi?
Bulan yang lepas sudah berhutang,
Bulan kini membayar faedahnya,
dan keadaan bertambah buruk.*

*Apa terjadi kepadaku?
Ku ke sekolah mendapat pendidikan.
Mendapat ilmu dan kepakaran,
Yang menyediaku untuk pekerjaan.*

*Ya, itulah menjadi masalahnya,
Pendidikan menyediaku,
hanya untuk pasaran pekerjaan,
bukan untuk mengurus kehidupanku.*

*Kutidak dididik,
menjadi peka dalam urusan wang,
merancang perbelanjaanku,
dan bersikap jimat cermat.*

*Kutidak dididik,
mengenai iklan dan teknik-teknik jualan,
yang memesongkan keutamaanku
dan mengapikan amalan hidup kebendaan.*

*Kutelah diperangkap,
menjadi mangsa budaya pengguna,
Semuanya kerana kugagal,
mendapat pendidikan pengguna.*

Bishan Singh Bahadur, Pengguna, Jilid 6 Bil 5, 1987



A Tribute to Bishan

Shanthini M. Ramiah

It was on the morning of December 1st, 2006 when I was going through my emails I received the news of Bishan's passing away. I just froze at the machine for almost five whole minutes and then cried uncontrollably. When I regained my composure, I called his daughter, Sunita and strangely it was Sunita who was consoling me. Till today I regret not being there for Bishan's final rites.

BISHAN SINGH BAHADUR- it was just a name I always came across during my early years in the NGO environment. Sometimes I got a glimpse of this gentleman who drifted in and out of the International Organisation of Consumers Unions (IOCU) in the late eighties when I worked there. It was only in 1992 that I came in personal contact with him when he was appointed as one of the members of the Steering Council of Pesticides Action Network (PAN) Asia Pacific. As a staff representative to the steering committee and council, my involvement at those meetings gave me an opportunity to get to know him both professionally and personally.

His approach towards what was happening around him really impressed me especially his simple ways and humbleness. There were often times we just sat around him to hear him talk about his early days in his hometown Nibong Tebal, his teaching profession, his love for Penang food especially nasi kandar, his children especially his grandson and most of all about his loving wife, Mary. There were times when Mary would join him during his meetings and I used to admire their togetherness. How they both would disagree about everything and yet show so much love and care, especially when he kept teasing her and she replied in kind! I will always remember the many gems of motherly and fatherly advice I received from them.

From a serious management consultant speaking on entrepreneurship, he could switch to a yoga guru with the same intensity and drive. Some of my very memorable and close working moments were in 2000 when he was appointed as consultant to write a funding proposal for PAN Asia Pacific. During those times he was so serious, so demanding and sometimes even 'grumpy' and put a lot of pressure on the team. But at the end of each day he would wind up by conducting some yoga *asanas* and taught us some mantras to calm us down. When I left PAN Asia Pacific in 2003, I remember his parting words to me, *"You will never really retire from this work - somehow you will live in the work you left behind."* **And I truly believe he will always be alive within the civil society movement.** I last saw Bishan at the PAN AP office in August 2006 and remember fondly his blessings and warm hug he gave me and my son.

I still treasure a copy of the mantras he passed on to me in year 2000 and I usually recite this particular one (Bishan's personal favourite) regularly.

*Om divine Guardian of this abode
I humbly invoke you
To pay my respect and love
I seek your hospitality
And guidance to protect me
Guide me and bless me
I pray for your salvation
And peace*

With that I cherish his memories and pray for his soul to rest in Peace!

| Shantini M. Ramiah is a former staff of PAN AP. She currently resides in Kuala Lumpur



Cabaran Semasa

*Masanya sudah tiba
di mana kehidupan
di dalam dunia ini menjadi sukar*

*Udara – asas pernafasan hidup
dicemari dengan habuk dan debu
dan hujan asid menjadi-jadi*

*Air – asas minuman
dikotori dengan najis dan kimia
dan alam air mula dimusnahi*

*Makanan – asas hilang kelaparan
diracuni dengan kimia dan pewarna
dan penyakit bertambah menjadi-jadi*

*Kehendak – dijadikan keperluan hidup
bagi membangunkan budaya pengguna
yang memesong dan membazir*

*Budaya Pengguna – dijadikan nilai hidup
bagi membangunkan budaya pengguna
yang memesong dan membazir*

*Nafsu kebendaan – mewujudkan ketidakadilan
bagi menyebabkan agihan sumber
yang tidak seimbang dan betul*

*Ketidakadilan – melemahkan iman manusia
bagi menyebabkan masalah-masalah
kemiskinan dan segala rusuhan dunia ini.*

Bishan Singh Bahadur, Pengguna, Jilid 6 Bil 2, 1987



Bishan as a Problem-Solver

Professor Bob Kerton

Bishan Singh was exemplary as a public-spirited citizen. He was admirable as a friend and as a leader. I remember him best as a stunningly successful problem-solver. “Impossible” was not a word he used. When a social change was needed, he moved directly to a solution. An example of his success with challenges was sharply evident in 1983 when he took me to meet the people in the fishing village on the Nenasi River.

When we arrived at the village, everyone was out, and the air was full of anticipation. They had a surprise for Bishan. They were eager and proud to present a new fishing canoe. They wanted to launch it – with pomp and ceremony – on the occasion of his visit. Bishan, of course was pleased, and he took advantage of having a visitor from Canada to add gravity to the occasion. (The fresh blue paint on the ritual canoe was not yet dry, and the villagers were a little embarrassed about it getting on our hands.) Why did they hold Bishan in such awe? And why did they want to surprise him with the new canoe they had paid to create?



Along the Nenasi River.

Source:<http://choratchoret.blogspot.com/2007/12/nenasi-pahang.html>

On earlier visits Bishan recognized that a ten or eleven hour day of work required nearly four hours of paddling upstream to get to the fish. Bishan sized up the situation and arranged for a grant and loan so the village could purchase several 2-horsepower Suzuki motors to fasten onto their boats. More time could be spent fishing and as a result the weekly catch had nearly doubled. At the time of our visit, the loan for the motors was already repaid and enough extra had been earned that the first new boat had been financed.

Bishan was a dear friend and those who knew him lost a lot. So did the world.

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Bishan Singh Bahadur was President of the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (FOMCA) from 1981-1988. During his tenure as President he strived to transform the national federation into a prominent and professionally managed organization to achieve a vision of a fair and just society, and a better quality of life for all Malaysians. As President of Pahang Association of Consumers from 1976- 1996, he built a grassroots organization that achieved the distinction of being the largest consumer association in South East Asia in the 1980's.

Bishan was a teacher, consumerist, environmentalist, development practitioner, town councillor, farmer, father, husband and friend. His work touched the lives of Malaysians and many rural people around the world.

Bishan was a true patriot deeply committed to social justice and self - empowerment of people. Malaysia lost one of its finest citizens on 29 Nov 2006.

The tributes in this commemorative volume by his colleagues and friends capture his love for land and people very graphically.



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