

The Pollution of the Kim Kim River – Clear Manifestation of the Corruption Caused by Capitalism

News:

On the 25th of March 2019, two directors and a lorry driver of a used tyre-processing company were charged in the Sessions Court of Johor Bahru with being involved in the chemical dumping into the Kim Kim River in Johor, a state to the south of the peninsular of Malaysia. To date, more than 5,000 people have been the victims of these pollutants around the township of Pasir Gudang over the past few weeks. The pollution was due to the dumping of chemical waste at the Kim Kim River which had resulted in the dispersal of volatile toxic materials throughout the area. The victims who had inhaled the toxic substances were reported to have headaches, vomiting, shortness of breath and fainting. Some of the victims were hospitalized and some were even admitted to intensive care units (ICU). The pollution had forced 111 schools and several tertiary institutions to be closed. It was only after about 10 days that the cleanup process were carried out. The cleanup of the affected 1.5km stretch at the Kim Kim River started on March 13 and took four days to complete.

Comment:

What happened at river Kim Kim prompts questions as to why such episode could be allowed to happen. Many were perplexed as to why there are still irresponsible parties who were not thinking of public safety and dumped toxic waste into public rivers. Some had the impression that this still occurs because the punishment for such act is fairly light and some blamed it on the weak enforcement of existing environmental laws. This results in finger pointing without many realizing that the main cause of such a tragedy is the ideology which spans today's economic system.

Capitalism - which focuses on production in a competitive market - is an economic system that puts the maximizing of profit while reducing cost of production as its core, especially in the private sector. The motivation to maximize profit and reduce cost encourages entrepreneurs to increase productivity on a large scale and allocate resources in the cheapest ways in the name of growth. Because competition in the market is huge and pressing, entrepreneurs will venture for technologies that can save cost, which will enable them to overcome the pressure that comes from its competitors in the market. Additionally, entrepreneurs are also faced with the cost of handling manufacturing waste and abiding by the environmental laws, which also incurs significant cost. One obvious way to save is to 'dump the cost' to the environment.

Consequently, we should not be surprised when these capitalists pollute the environment and deliberately dump toxic wastes into rivers and open areas without caring for the dangers faced by others. In addition to that, unfortunately, when

companies from developed countries want to save cost, they move their factories to third world and developing countries. Due to the weak enforcement of environmental laws in these countries, they are relatively free to dump toxic wastes of their industries to the environment. It is a known secret that capitalist companies from developed countries make developing and the third world countries waste bins for toxic wastes of their industries.

The Father of Capitalism, Adam Smith in his book *The Wealth of Nations*, mentioned that individualism and greed are good because ultimately these behaviour will benefit the community as they will spark innovation amongst entrepreneurs. What happened in Pasir Gudang does not even come close to the description of 'good to the community'. In fact, the philosophy of Capitalism is obviously a sham when it is clear that greed and individualism manifestly destroy the environment and endanger the society. Empirical evidence in fact shows that greed and individualism are also the root cause of slave labour, women exploitation, monopoly market, recession, the widening of the gap between the rich and poor and other mishaps of capitalism. In short, Capitalism really brings more destruction to mankind than good.

Therefore, in events such as the contamination of the Kim Kim River, we must reflect upon ourselves and return to Allah's prescription upon man, His Shariah. Allah swt said: ﴿ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمَلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ﴾ **“There is real mischief in the land and in the sea due to the hands of men, that He may make them taste the consequence of their deeds, so that they return (to the right path)”** [TMQ ar-Rum (30): 41].

This environmental catastrophe is clearly the consequence of men who are motivated by Capitalism. This ideology is corrupt from its roots, and humanity deserves better. Why then should we hold on to such a corrupt system when Allah swt has revealed to us Islam as the perfect system?

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Dr. Mohammad – Malaysia