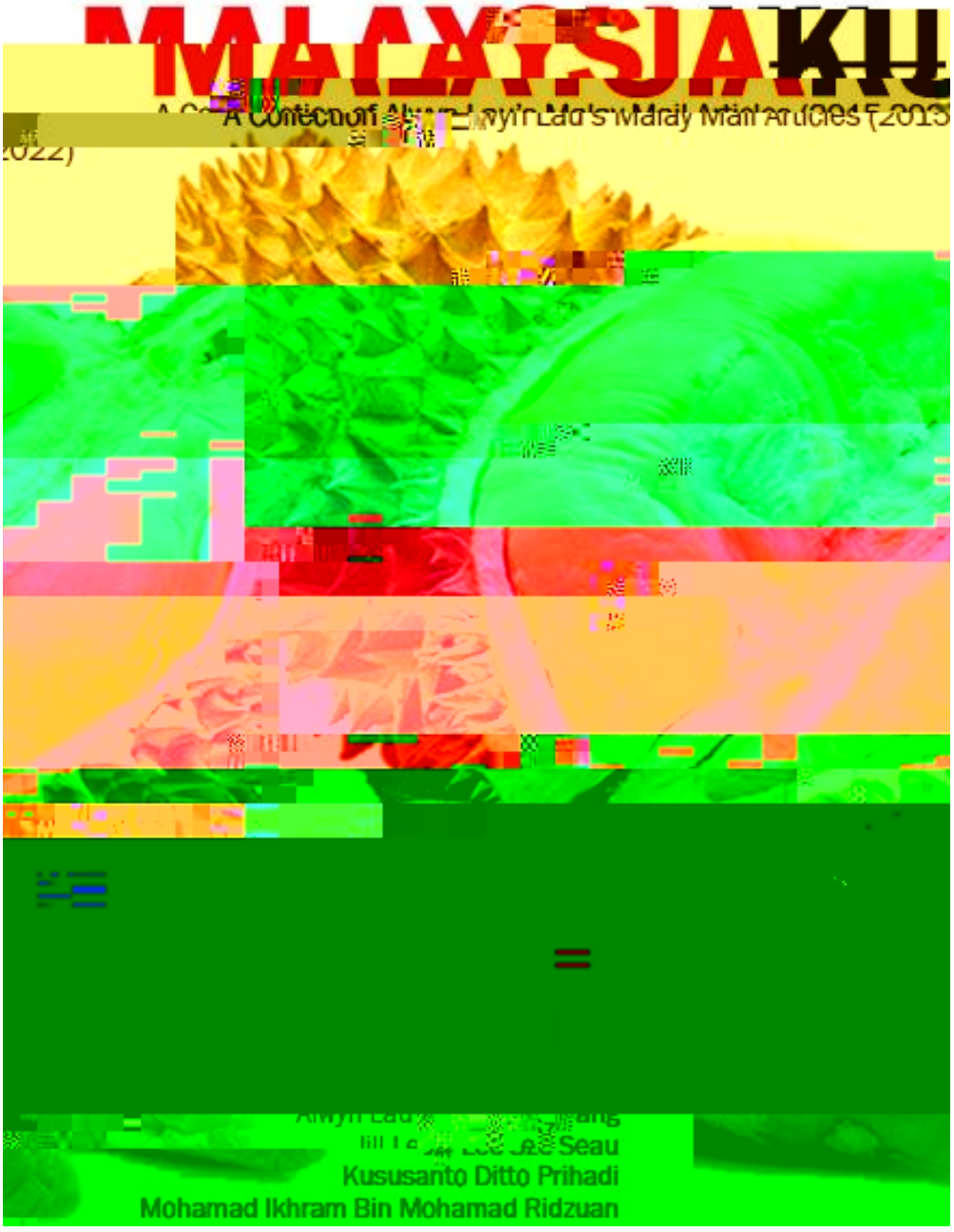
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PREFACE

It

XO: Bolehland, Kiasuland and Koalaland

The other day someone asked me if I wanted to migrate. After getting rebuked for addressing me like I

Singapore you can make loads

Koalaland, well, is the birthplace of Wolverine, Thor, all those hotshots played by Russell Crowe, not to

BLACK THORN:
MALAYSIAN EDUCATION

About half a dozen years ago I published an article on 10 paradoxes in our education system. In light of the upcoming PT3 and SPM examinations, I thought I may revise, update and add to them. Here we go:

1. In school, **90% of the 'top' students join the Science stream**, but afterwards 90% of school-leavers go into Business and 120% of them want to do nothing but make money. Also, early on school kids dream of being, say, a pilot or doctor or lawyer or Iron Man and so on. But when they grow up? They only want to care how.

2. In school, **90% of the material is delivered in Malay**, but 90% of professional life is communicated in Engreesh. So not only will you have thousands of grads talking like they need to include subtitles beneath their conversations, this system will also directly contribute to our unemployment rate for fresh

char siew pau level.

3. In school, **Maths and Science are deemed critical**; these are more or less the subjects which send tuition class owners grinning to Maybank. But, alas after school the only Biology we care about is what Angelina Jolie eats for lunch, the only Physics

that) that in the office *people are not always who they seem* i.e.

E-learning remains an enigma.

On one hand, during this 2020-2021 Movement Control Order (MCO) but

[redacted] Having said that, after conversations

with some people (including students), you do wonder if we could use this crisis-opportunity to push the envelope a little more education-wise.

been chatting casually with parents and students (both primary

talking, working collaboratively with each other (instead of from the teacher) and so on. The teacher, in such cases, usually perform

may be as yet insufficiently developed to deal with such minority; the majority of school children, I suspect, would love to at least try.

pandemic or just the over-supply over post-graduate programs in the country, but have you noticed more and more folks talk about continuing their studies? Maybe do a PhD or DBA or MBA or whatever? I have.

enthusiastic and as short-lived!
folks start, but not many finish.

So if one of those presently thinking of doing such programs, I wish to offer what I call my "iron laws" to check if you have a good chance of completing them. Having seen friends finish their PhDs', DBAs' and MBAs' (and many more fail or drop out) and having supervised numerous students over the years, I can more or less predict who will finish, who will finish faster than usual, who will (probably) drop out, who will need to keep extending and extending their semesters, etc.

So, behold, the four iron laws of post-graduate studies:

1. Never do a post-grad degree being forced or pressured to

Every time someone tells me applying to do a post-grad course

or quit the program. It just happening.

There is simply no integrity in your and here and there.

3. Love your subject or don't start.

When it comes to studying for your doctoral, "marketability" should take a hike. Motivation and drive are the key factors and the one thing pump them up is love love love.

You gotta be so infatuated with your topic, your spouse wonders if you love him or her anymore. This is really the only way keep suffering for 2 or 3 or 4 years.

twenty articles (because, sigh, Islamic banking products in Malaysia the easiest to find online and dammit my librarian when I need him?). An intense curiosity for your subject will.

Thoughts of a bigger office keep you skimming through dozens of e-databases articles (because, oh my, this IR 4.0 stuff is complex as heck). Passion for your topic will.

A higher salary make you get up at 4am just to add that extra few thoughts on to chapter 3 because what Helen Scales wrote on ecology is brilliant and must be added to your section on marine tourism. But, of course, love will.

Sure, the luckiest post-grads are those whose subject will also substantially elevate their career prospects. But this must be strictly a secondary concern, especially when it comes to drive and motivation.

This is **a** marathon. Whatever else thinking about, you must *enjoy* running.

4. If possible, do a proposal early.

such offerings or suggest anything untoward academically. But one major

Note 1: An MBA can be, and is mainly done, part-time because such programs are specifically catered for busy businesspeople -in to the demands of the syllabus. Having said that, the drop-rate for the average MBA is still around 30%. I suspect this is heav -time character.

will have different connotations for you. Oh, not sure what duties a lecturer has? Let me break it down for you. A full-time lecturer generally has to:

- Prepare the lesson plans for *all* classes according to the approved learning objectives of the -ass slides of the previous lecturer but if you fail to grab your attention on you)
- Mark attendance and report students who are absent (good luck)
- Counsel or tutor students who need post-class assistance (goodbye
- Prepare two sets of exam questions and answers for each official assessment (where you realize that creativity really pay)
- Vet the exam questions set by *other* lecturers (be gentle)
- Prepare exam reports (and God help you if more than half your class fails)
- Fill up whatever hundred forms required to be filled up by the Malaysians Qualifications Agency (MQA), which is like Bank Negara for the education sector
- Everything and anything else your department requires of you (which may include, but is not limited to: attending education fairs, being the teacher-counsellor for student clubs, attending meetings which have nothing to do with you, organizing conferences, etc.)

all the above, you can be assured your students will be the first to notice. And not just notice but perhaps like what Thanos said to Tony Stark before

Fragile

The recent (2016) news of an 11-year-old schoolboy from Singapore who committed suicide because he failed a subject should leave us all stunned.[5] It should -
cruel paradox is most parents remain stuck in the cycle of Die-Die Also Must Succeed (pun sadly intended).

In the Ancient Near East certain tribes sacrificed tribes

until he scores 95%, followed later by 96%.

losers (and even ask about failure, beyond comprehension).

MUSANG KING: POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY

I welcome the decision by the Islamic Legal Consultative Committee in the Federal Territories to

gyrating micro-dinosaurs taunting them with suggestive looks and the temptation of scoring higher than their schoolmates.

Pokémon is Legion Are

The people who proposed the *fatwa* have it right: Pokémon represents religious degradation at its lowest level. If the movie *Conjuring* was about spiritual violence, Pokémon GO is outright spiritual massacre. genocide, I tell you.

If you need further proof of the
Pokémon comes from the French-Mandarin- -month
how many Pokémon demons

are there to date? Answer: North of 700!

I rest

nation the world could be proud of slowly but inevitably fell apart and reverted to the age-old rot of money and race-based politics.

Unfortunately, the whole world knows that the fall of Pakatan Harapan, to be replaced by the highly inefficient Perikatan Nasional (again, amidst a ton of soap-opera like power games between old have come at a worst time.

The Covid-19 pandemic been dealt with much more effectively if the government, you know, had a bloody clue about what they were trying to do. Instead, we have a train-wreck of half- -minute instructions affecting millions of businesses, non-compliant breaking with impunity and the train-wreck of three and now possibly four waves of infection.

Fast forward and surprise surprise we have a PHONE CALL in which, yet again, shown -called ideology or values and it sure as heck about the country.

Essentially, the politics which matter in Malaysia are about what two or three individuals conspire to get for themselves.

-prize winning novel, *The Sellout*, the protagonist reinstated segregation in a small town as a way of reinvigorating his black community. Perversely, he realized that negroes required institutional discrimination as a means of casting off the pretense or façade of formal equality, a subtle deception which was a greater burden than overt racism.

I wonder what Beatty if he was in KL last Saturday during the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) rally.

ratified, right? Surely this must be the minority groups pissed at the government for refusing to take the next important step towards ending racial discrimination, no? This rally is a straight-forward rally against racism, right?

But hang on. Wait a minute. Huh? This protest is by members of the majority segment, the

Another crisis, another conflict, another volley of rockets, another sortie of retaliatory strikes. In the end, only one outcome, as always, prevails: The IDF and Israeli leadership as a whole will grow

that Israel is the

In the light of history (from 1948 and even to this day), therefore, to brand Israel a regime is the worst kind of hypocrisy ever: Almost like UMNO accusing DAP of cronyism.

Four guys caned for having gay sex. A radical preacher from overseas remains protected. Child marriages remain legal. The LGBQT community remains threatened. A Christian whereabouts remains unknown. And the religious police continue to stalk, roam and hunt those whose private lives fit the approved script.

prefer this country to be a second Pakistan? Or maybe another Iran?

A foreign preacher promotes violence towards non-Muslims, we shelter him like -day Anne Frank fleeing from But one call from Thailand to send back their anti-monarch activist and we obey like an inter- *Thank you for your order, you want handcuffs with the dissident?* Likewise, disabled Jewish swimmers want to swim in Kuching we treat *them* like terrorists and go on BBC bragging about with our Palestinian brothers and sisters whilst at the same time kowtowing
realize Muslims in the Middle-East mattered so much more than those in Asia, or gasp! would this double standard have anything to do with China not being spelled I-s-r-a-e-l?

I help but recall that UMS student who performed his Nazi salute during his convocation last week [10]. The irony of him being a History grad was not lost on most people. We could also highlight the deeper irony of him posting his messages on a platform created by a Jew (i.e. Facebook) and (I guess) using an app invented by an Israeli company,

minding our business. We are *so* damn concerned about how people conduct their sexual lives, our religious police despite it almost being 2020 still raid hotel rooms and drag consenting adults to religious jail. Likewise, the farcical & show can only be popular in places like Malaysia where, somehow, a matter of national concern what two guys who love each other do behind closed doors. Me? not gay, want to be gay, and particularly want to watch *Brokeback Mountain*,

minister, an executive or whatever. And I certainly cannot see the rationale of two adults who love each other being caned as punishment (unless uh, each other, of course).

This all seems to be part of the same disease in which one stranger believes he has the right to tell another stranger who allowed to be attracted to sexually.

In the same vein, I wish these same religious officers (or other non-religious ones) would raid the homes of those middle-aged men who take teenage girls as their brides, some as young as 11. When almost 6,000 teenage girls are being raped legally in seven states out of thirteen, every damn year, only one

almost 2 million c
is under-reacting on this matter just like they are plain *frozen* when it comes to enforced disappearances of people like Pastor Raymond Koh.[11]

The very thought that our government cares so much more for Zakir Naik than Pastor Raymond totally

universe in which gay folks can be thrown off buildings just for being gay, and Jewish people executed in public just for being Jewish, and little girls married off to old guys who already have wives just because, well, the guy likes them young.

The recent controversy over the issue of make

canteens found in six Malacca schools[13] does

Option #1 Minority Rules, Majority Acquiescence i.e. "some cannot eat pork, so all don't eat pork"; all canteen food halal, so everyone eats the same thing, the majority (non-Malay) follow the minority

most fast-food restaurants. Generally, everyone gives way to the minority and that.

egan as missionary schools and a vernacular school (both

You know why Southeast Asia never produced a Gautama Buddha or Isaac Newton? Because all these world-

uh, falling upon them.

-
out crazy over a slimy substance which stinks so bad you can see dead cockroaches in your car boot after you drive home with your durians.

You know how every Malaysian is an expert in politics, education, world affairs, early childhood

our in an average kopi-tiam). Well, between June and August, we are also experts in durians.

Every Malaysian knows everything there is to know about XO, Golden Phoenix, D24, etc. where to buy price range of each breed plus which stalls

picking up lazy super-hero names with passive-aggressive undertones: Black Thorn, Red Prawn, Green Bamboo.

It really sounds like an all-male team with a metrosexual edge. It also demonstrates the versatility of the fruit; in a, uh, nutshell it can burst forth flavors which range from seafood to hard liquor to something pandas eat.

ajesty the Ruler of Musangistan himself, the Musang King. I think if

you know, his uncle wanted the throne, plotted to kill his dad and pin the blame on the son, blahblahblah. This joker costs anywhere from RM38 to RM2000 per kg and no durian lover worth his

become our national mascot.

would be tantamount to a

decline when you see his or her face on almost every brochure or product ad. Ditto Da King *of the King* of Fruits.

Nowadays, every dish must have durian inside. From ice-cream, to cendol, to nasi lemak, to biscuits, to cake, to whiskey(!) and p
walls? Durian slippers, durian-

Simply ask those people living in America, Canada, Europe, Australia. You know what they pay for durians? Almost enough to get a brand-new Tesla Model 3.

made it on Jimmy Kimmel Live, brought into the studio by none other than Jessica Chastain (who

Finally, I wish to remind the younger generation that one must never eat durians without participating in that time-
-
empty husk, but that might be difficult). You see, like how the skull of the xenomorph (in the Aliens

thing which purifies water to the point where it removes the stains and smells of the pods from your hands.

Cuba, jangan tak cuba. And if that totally boosts the miracle.

Just my crappy luck with a delayed flight. So there I was, waiting 30 hours in the lounge because my -haired obviously-non-Malaysian passenger was talking about her upcoming cross-peninsular tour. Being the eaves-

- *Nasi Kandar*

which i

-zero for nasi kandar; this means that every two weeks all the nasi kandar sellers from KL make a trip to the island to *kowtow* thirty times before the master of their universe, failing which the Angel of Death will descend upon KL and transform all the nasi kandar in the Federal Territories into grub that even Singaporeans will reject.

-famous *cendol* in that alley which, on some occasions, can produce a queue so long even the Thai border authorities start getting concerned. This cendol-seller is living-eating proof that food is art, and one of his cendol bowls better hang in the Louvre really fast lest the Mona Lisa starts to weep tears like green worms and calling for more ice and jagung.

cendol -

medal winner drinks before they show the silver- s.

One of my personal favorites is this dish called *Kueh Kak*. This is carrot cake for the uninformed, but *way* different from that RM500-a- -the-wifi-password nonsense, Kueh Kak is fried to obscene perfection and served with goodies like taugeh, eggs and world peace.

invaded; when he cooks even God takes notes. Every time I visit him, I buy four huge packets and I refuse to share -

Anyway, I wanted to tell the tourist that when you visit KL, every other food stall will have the word

island-state because should it *not*, people will stop eating hawker food and spend all their money at KFC instead.

-seller

to do this in Penang would be to perform professional *kamikaze*. Even the stray cats will be jumping ship and leaving shitty comments in TripAdvisor.

Bottom line: The food in Penang makes the food in KL look like glorified leftovers for the tenants at the Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

the wrong country.

Mic drop.

So, your great granddad *makan* place so your extended family (and *their* extended families) all get to join the celebrations, right? And it has to be a *Chinese* restaurant (replete with round tables and red tablecloths

Law #2 - You shall never mention that guests must pay.

This one is critical. You can never ever say that your beloved guests must do something as unheard of and uncivilized as actually pay for their own food. To even hint otherwise will be a violation of the very rules of the universe which erected the Great Wall. This is a *Chinese* dinner not a Dutch one.

Yes yes yes EVERYBODY knows that the passport into the dinner hall involves a packet (usually red in color but gold is acceptable, too

annihilated into ashes and blown to the four corners of the world, their souls forced to walk the dark road of shame and judgment.

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L

Enjoy the dinner.

And congratulations.

h these kinds of dinner packages, even the

Will Smith (Just The 2 Of Us)

-Most-Beloved-Parent Contest. My popularity

There is also the concern that caning makes the child feel like a bad and lousy person. Well, gee, for some children simply being TOLD not to do something or being REFUSED a brand-new toy makes them every time? I

disciplining -

3. Caning children is wrong because violence begets violence; children will grow up to become

True but irrelevant, especially if :

ompanied by firm instruction and explanation of why Daddy is smacking your butt and

c) if children are likewise reprimanded for using violence on other children, etc.

This kpersokt

Life is not at all about living from one pleasant feeling to another, neither should it be about running away from risky psychological events. I fully understand if parents wish to protect their kids from emotional scars, sure, but *over*-protection is also a danger.

Indeed, there is a growing consensus that the occasional *stressor* is necessary to build character, strength -So-

- painless living.

Like how fasting can make the body healthier, *some* psychological/physical discomfort may be worth it. Children can be (gradually, carefully) exposed to the fact that sore discipline is an appropriate consequence of in-discipline.

In general, tradition and experience support the practice of caning children with the intention that they

Conclusion: If we wish to outlaw caning, we should have a lot more evidence and much better arguments than presently supplied.

RED PRAWN: PANDEMIC

-19[15]

also kill thousands of people

There are some severe errors with comparing the flu with Covid-19. To list just a few: We have vaccines for flus, but not Covid-19. Some people have temporary immunity from flu, but at present there is no immunity from Covid-19. Most importantly, if your elderly loved one gets the flu, chances are pretty good he or she won -19, you better start praying. Hard.

Essentially, Covid-19 is an Unknown and in the face of an Unknown, the responsible response is to heighten our alertness and **err on the side of caution** if necessary.

can give your child is to Never Follow Strangers. This directive, as we all know, is 120% non-negotiable. We never say to our children, oh, if the strang
okay to follow her. We just say *Never* follow strangers. Period.

Because in such a high-

-19 by talking about the flu is
but Covid-19 is
something which our health infrastructure is not prepared for. Imagine if, overnight, a few hundred (or even thousands) of people suddenly being admitted for Covid-19. Even if a majority of them survive (and, thank God, they probably will) think about the ***fresh crushing weight of all these new patients on the existing load of medical requirements.***

rate yet. At 4% mortality, if even a *fifth*
potentially almost
250,000 dead. Let that sink in.

Systematic vs Idiosyncratic Risk

What about comparing Covid-19 to car crashes and dengue? The chances of dying in a
-19, so

Two quick responses. The first,
still must be careful to empty our pails in the garden, at the very least our hospitals are not going to be overwhelmed.

-19 and things like car crashes is because this
new virus constitutes a **systematic risk** **idiosyncratic risk**.
A systematic risk is something which, as per its name, threatens to pervade the *entire* system. Like the global market system. A crash at the London Stock Exchange threatens every other stock market. A political crisis in Penang cannot be ignored by the people in KL. These are systematic risks.

On the other hand, an idiosyncratic risk is when one incident has minimal or zero effect on another. Two

Likewise, if someone gets dengue in SS2 that doesn

being infected has risen.

when even one healthy person gets it, it will raise the probability of an unhealthy or elderly person getting it. Ergo, systematic risk.

-19 is hitting our society hard, but it is only *as a society* that we can contain and defeat it.

-lockdown
slash closure-of-almost- e happened earlier much earlier, at least a week or two in advance if not in late Feb itself. Compared to countries like Vietnam, Kuwait, Denmark, etc. Malaysia

What follows are thus three principles I hope all of us can remember in order that future national crisis scenarios (or even potential emergencies within your organization) can be addressed earlier:

1

Undoubtedly the #1 reason why most Malaysians remained complacent even in early March (and despite all the news coming from China, Italy and so on) is because we *did not believe* we could get infected.
nd, coupled with some pretty bad

But this is a mistake for one simple reason: **In a high-impact scenario, you must throw probability out the window.**

because you may break your

stranger at any one time will kidnap your child, but because you fully understand the irreversibility of your child being taken away.

Same thing with C19.

Pop quiz: Which is more dangerous for the country? Option A, ten malls recording a few positive Covid-19 cases each or option B, a cluster with 30-40 pax infected?

react similarly to news of KLCC Suria being infected with one person as with news about three dozen being infected from some gathering in Kedah. In fact, some will even claim that multiple malls being infected is a worse-off situation than a cluster.

But I want to suggest today that Option B is way more important
reserves are limited, we should channel most of our concern towards clusters rather than the one

A cluster, on the other hand, is already by definition a runaway train.

More and more people have already become infected, leading to a very strong likelihood of an outbreak.

schedule we need to reduce one-size-fits-all approaches and start being, well, creative?

Note 1: To be very clear here, like almost every Malaysian, I am incensed that political leaders can

that thankfully not all irresponsible behavior produces disastrous consequences.

Note 2: My googling turned up just one result in which was discussed within the two pediatricians, Dr Musa Mohd Nordin and Dr Husna Musa from

finesse).

Further Reading

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Last week[16], the Health Ministry dropped our mask mandates for outdoors, whilst retaining it indoors. Even though this decision appears like the worst of both worlds the pro-mask camp claiming it puts us more at risk, the anti-mask one complaining about its half-heartedness I think at the very least it can help in moving the discussion forward.

Well, clearly they will be at higher risks than vaxxed folks but, and I know this sounds tough, perhaps

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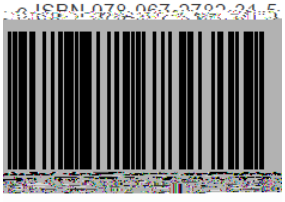

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