Answering questions on corruption

By David Jenkins

Jakarta: “Outside the office, Pak (father) Harto is very kind to his family and relatives, but he has never given us a leg up to enrich ourselves.” With those words, President Suharto’s younger brother, Probo Sutodjo, has hit back at critics who charge that the Indonesian first family has taken advantage of its position to amass a vast personal fortune.

Probo Sutodjo’s detailed disclaimer about “favourites for the family,” made with the President’s full knowledge and blessing, came amid renewed rumours about high-level corruption in Indonesia (Review, Oct. 8). With the President’s eldest son Sigit at his side, the businessman brother of the Indonesian Head of State told a press conference he had never sought and had never been given special facilities by Bapak Suharto either in his capacity as a President or private citizen.

He strongly denied rumours, widely circulated abroad, that Indonesia’s First Lady, Ibu Tien Suharto, owned many businesses, including the plush hotel Kartika Chandra. These rumours, he said, had been circulated to disgrace the good name of the President and his family.

Probo Sutodjo said he had never received Government credits for the construction of the factories he owned and neither had the ranch in Tapos, run by Sigit Suharto, enjoyed loan facilities.

“Rumours say that Sigit Suharto owns a number of companies,” said Probo Sutodjo, “whereas in fact he only owns the Rejosari Bumi ranch.”

Probo Sutodjo said that two companies enjoyed a monopoly over the lucrative importation of cloves into Indonesia. One of these companies was PT Mega; the other was Mercu Buana, which he owned. “However, it was not Pak Harto who recommended that my company should be one of the ones to get the licence, but Dr Sumitro [Djojohadikusumo], Trade Minister at the time.” According to Probo Sutodjo, the President had cautioned that “it is better not to choose Mercu Buana because it is owned by my brother. People will assume it’s a facility given by me.” However, Dr Sumitro had insisted on the grounds that the company was experienced and that its proposal was sound.

As well as a clove-importing company, Probo Sutodjo has a building company, a glass factory, a bag company, a compost plant, a hardboard company, a cooking oil company and a chicken farm. All of these businesses paid taxes, he said, although it was rumoured they had never done so.

The President, he said, did not give his family “a leg up to enrich themselves.” The President had 10 brothers and sisters and only one (Probo Sutodjo) was a businessman. The President’s foster-father had nine children but only one was a businessman. Madame Suharto has nine brothers and sisters but only three were engaged in business.

“Although we have never asked for and have never been given special favours by Pak Harto,” Probo Sutodjo said, “we must admit that our success is due to Pak Harto’s position — the Javanese call it kena sawabnya [enjoying good fortune]. If Government officials sympathise with us because we happen to be relatives of Pak Harto, it is just good fortune, because we haven’t asked for it.”

There have been persistent reports in the foreign press that members of the first family, particularly the President’s wife, have considerable business interests in Indonesia. Probo Sutodjo’s comments, which have attracted widespread reaction in Jakarta, came only two weeks after President Suharto issued a six-point statement denying that his family or his wife’s family had received special treatment from the Government “in launching enterprises aimed at easy and big profits.”

Rumours that this kind of special treatment had been given had been voiced by irresponsible people, the President said. The allegations and rumours were complete fabrications and did not contain a grain of truth. “Such rumours,” he said, “are not based on fact and will weaken both the authority of the Government and the national leadership.”

Arrests confirm dissidents’ fears

By William Armbruster

Taipei: Forecasts by Taiwanese dissidents of a Government security clampdown (Review, Aug. 6) appear to have been justified. There has been a wave of arrests, apparently prompted by Government concern over possible opposition activity later in the year. Dissidents believe the Government aims to reduce adverse reaction to a crackdown by spacing arrests over a long period instead of making a single massive swoop.

Those picked up in the latest series of raids include 11 Taiwanese who had previously served jail sentences for dissent activities. As repeat offenders they could receive more severe punishment this time. All 11 are more than 50 years old and may have been connected with plans to hold an opposition conference before 1977. Three of those arrested are from Taipei; the others come from central and southern Taiwan. The key figure in the group appears to be Chen Ming-chung, proprietor of a Chinese medicine factory in Taipei. Those arrested either worked for the factory or for an electrical appliance firm.

The authorities have charged the 11 with subversive activities, and it may well be that they were sending funds to Taiwanese independence groups overseas. Certainly they would have a motive for such action, as they would naturally hold a grudge against the Kuo-min-tang after serving more than 10

OCTOBER 15, 1976
years in jail for dissident activities in the late 1940s and early 1950s. All, however, had been out of jail for more than 10 years.

In an apparently related move, the proprietor of a bookstore who sold proscribed Japanese books under the counter has been arrested. Dissidents fear that his arrest could lead to another wave of arrest as the bookstore owner kept a detailed list of his customers and their purchases. Possession of such contraband material is grounds for criminal prosecution under Taiwan’s martial law.

At least one radio station official has been picked up because of a programme whose title, Wang Kuo Chun Hou, a Confucian phrase referring to the benevolent kingdom, has almost the same sound as Wang Kuo Chien Hou, an idiom portending imminent national doom. Neither of these arrests nor other incidents reported by dissidents has been mentioned in the local press.

At the same time that some dissidents are going to jail, others are supposed to be coming out. The writer Lee Ao is scheduled for release in November, while Wei Ting-chao, a student of fugitive independence leader Peng Ming-min, is due for release in October. But friends fear they may suffer the same fate as satirist Po Yang. Po’s prison term ended this spring, but the authorities have refused to allow him to leave Green Island. He is, however, no longer confined to prison quarters and has some freedom of movement.

In another case, Yang Chin-hai, campaign manager for unsuccessful independent Yen Ming-shen in last December’s Legislative Yuan elections, has received a life sentence on charges of sedition, while Yen has been sentenced to 12 years imprisonment (Review, June 11). A written statement presented by Yang at his military trial in late July contended that Yang had signed a confession after being tortured by Investigation Bureau agents. Yang asserted that the agents placed needles inside his fingernails and beat him. He also claimed that the Bureau threatened to kill him if he failed to stand by his confession after his case was transferred to the Taiwan Garrison Command.

Yang’s defence against some of the charges was obviously flimsy. He admitted to receiving proscribed books, but he contended that he entrusted them to someone else for safekeeping because he did not want to be caught with them in his possession. Yet it would have been safer to destroy the illegal material rather than pass it on to someone else. He also admitted participation in illegal activities in a case involving one Kao Chung-chien, but he asked the court for mercy because of his cooperation with the authorities in testifying against Kao. The prosecution accused Yang of urging military officials to take part in

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Last week, the deputy chief of the Soviet border mission, General Gamburg, returned to Peking from Moscow and reported with a happy vodka belch that his boss, the evil chameleon Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Leonid Ilyich-yev, would also be back after six months’ absence in Moscow.

No one would ever expect the Russkies to surrender to Peking significant areas of the disputed border territory, raped from the Peking emperor by the Moscow tsar under the “unequal treaty” of Aigun 118 years ago. But could there now be superficial oral “adjustment” and hypocritical hand-shakes?

Peking can legitimately claim that more than 500,000 sq. miles of territory which is now Siberia or Far Eastern Russia belongs to China, but seeks the restoration of only 7,800 sq. miles, now occupied by reinforced, nuclear-armed Soviet troops.

However, the late Chou En-lai did suggest — reasonably enough — that Tsar-Comrade Leonid Brezhnev should at least confirm the honest if impudent admission by the infallible Comrade Lenin himself and the revisionist Comrade Trotsky that all Siberian territory seized at Aigun had originally belonged to China — although its physical return would not be demanded. That verbal concession has been rejected with a jobenovy oath by Comrade Ilyich-yev. Could it now be diplomatically yielded — without any actual retreat? Face would be saved by both sides.

TWO old friends of mine — neither CIA nor MI6 — who have just travelled from Moscow to Nakhodka on the trans-Siberian railway confirmed in Hongkong last week that Moscow’s three-year-old Russian re-christening of the old Han and Manchu names of rivers, towns and saltmires along the Siberian border is now an Act of God: Iman is Dalnerechinsk, Suchan is Partizanik (semantically appropriate), and the Anur River and the Ussuri are never called by their old Chinese variants of Heilung and Usuli.

Also, the Chinese rejection in 1858 of the term “boundary” still persists. Article 1 of the final treaty text at Aigun defined the agreed Russian empire “boundary” as “the left bank of the Anur River.” Chinese territorial authority ended, by that agreement, on “the right bank.” So in Siberia today, the Chinese are “the rightists” and the Russians are “the leftists.”

There are other instructive historical echoes if Moscow does now make a “leftist-boundary” gesture to post-Mao Peking. In 1858, Imperial China was at war with England and France, who had invaded Canton. And the late Comrade Mikhail Bakunin, an anarchist revolutionary participant in the First Internationale and a friend of Marx, who had been expelled to Siberia in 1857, happily hailed the Aigun treaty, which ousted the Chinese.

“The Slav Russians now stand on the Pacific,” he pointed out, “and an alliance with the United States, previously a platonic idea, now becomes a reality.”

After all, the Russkies are Slavs first and commies second, just as the Chinese are Chinese first and commies second.

And let it also be remembered that the tsarist founder of Russian Siberia, Governor-General Muravyev, in his imperialist proclamation to the Russian army and navy, addressed them with ironic foresight as “comrades.”

“Comrades! Our efforts have not been in vain. The Anur River now belongs to Russia. The Holy Orthodox Church prays for you. The Tsar and Russia thank you.”

Peking’s sorrowful signatory of the treaty was not a comrade: Prince I-Shan. However imperialist, his Chinese hat would still be in Peking’s corner today.
seditious activities and of conspiracy to bomb a power station in Kaohsiung. Yang said he had been framed, possibly by people within the Yen campaign organisation who bore grudges against him. Others believe that security agents who may have infiltrated the Yen campaign could be responsible for Yang’s present difficulties.

INDIA

Science catches up with yoga

By Harji Malik

New Delhi: When researchers from New Delhi’s All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) wanted to investigate the technique of a yogi who had walked on fire in front of them, he did a quick disappearing act. But the success they have achieved with other practitioners is beginning to have a value for modern medical science.

Research at AIIMS has focused on testing the claims of yoga adherents that they can control the body’s autonomous functions, and explaining how they do it. The work is being carried out by a small team established by the Indian Council of Medical Research and headed by physiologist Dr Gulzar Singh Chinning, a specialist on the nervous system.

As far back as 1957, scientists with portable equipment visited ashrams (religious centres) to carry out tests, starting with the biggest yoga centre in New Delhi and travelling as far afield as the Himalayas. The results of this random sampling proved inconclusive, so a programme was drawn up for conducting tests on beginners and experienced practitioners in controlled conditions with facilities for follow-up research.

Yoga’s main effect on beginners is to enable them to relax easily, with reduced heartbeat rate and respiration; as they gain experience, practitioners gain greater control over the body and master the more difficult positions, the asanas, the functions of which are also under study. Yogis are even able to change the functioning of their blood vessels, partly by exercising a degree of control over brain impulses. The researchers have found that certain forms of physical yoga enable individuals to absorb oxygen more effectively, which affects their metabolism, and thus the bodily functions. A practical application would be in training people to sustain themselves at high altitude, underground or wherever oxygen is in short supply.

The researchers have confirmed that yogis can stop their pulse and heartbeats for a few seconds. The yogis learn to put pressure on strategic points in the veins passing through the chest, which stops blood entering the heart. The pulse is the result of the vibration of the heart valves when the blood is pumped out; when the vibration stops, so does the pulse.

Tests have been performed on individuals who can slow their heartbeat rate from the normal 75 per minute to 30-35, probably by physical control and perhaps by influencing messages to the heart from the brain.

Control over changes in body temperature is a yoga technique with special significance for modern medicine. One subject proved he could sweat in different parts of his body at will; another demonstrated that he could produce different temperatures in each hand. Experts claim that they can lower body temperature by feeding the desired state mentally and then re-creating it when required. Chinning says this is the equivalent of “bio-feedback,” which is already used in the medical treatment of patients suffering from heart disease, blood pressure and certain brain ailments.

Bio-feedback is based on the body’s electrical rhythms, with the use of relaxation being the “alpha” rhythm. Patients are trained to retain it with the help of external measuring instruments which give a warning when the “alpha” state is lost. Most individuals cannot

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Bangkok: The Thai Government is experiencing problems with the 11,000 remnants of the 93rd Kuomintang (KMT) Division which crossed from Yunnan province in 1949 into Burma and later Thailand. They live in small, often inaccessible communities. Soon after settling down they organised a lucrative livelihood in the trade and refining of opium, grown not only in northern Thailand but also in the Shan state of Burma and in southern Laos.

The Government clamp-down on opium growing and prohibition of the trade has caused much friction between the KMT and the local Thais, who also depended on the opium trade for a livelihood. This led in the late 1960s to pitched battles.

Reports are coming out now about the drafts of young teenagers from families under the protection of the 93rd Kuomintang Division who are being forcibly recruited into the illegal army. At the same time the Government is providing light weapons for defence against the communists said to be concentrated in the area. The Government is also trying to assimilate this group by issuing residence permits so that their children will automatically become Thai. For the Chinese, this means a reduction in status from military to civilian refugee. But since Thai immigration officials do not consider the Chinese to be Thai, they must either submit to Thai authority or take out mainland passports.

The Chinese civilian refugees who also fled to northern Thailand in 1949 appear to have been well assimilated. (Thailand’s total Chinese population is about 300,000, many of whom have now settled further south.) Many fled in fear of their lives at the time of the communist takeover and their stories add credence to the dramatic propaganda about the “bitter” life before 1949 that the visitor gets so tired of in Peking. In a riverside village in which a number of Chinese had settled into the traditional life of the hills, they said that they had fled starvation and cold, never having had enough to eat or wear or homes to live in; improved conditions were unimaginable to them.

This correspondent was continually asked if it was true that everyone in China now had enough food and clothes. Although happy to hear about life in the homeland, none wanted to return to the rigours of the new society. Life with the Thai villagers was relaxed and easy. They said they did work “trading” with the “tea” factories, 3½ hours by foot up in the hills, but otherwise liked to sit and smoke and gamble.

Further north, at a civilian Chinese village, life was more sophisticated than in the hills, but the Chinese were equally relaxed and hospitable. They had all acquired Thai nationality, bought land and settled down to farm and trade, though still preserving many old Chinese habits, including their own brand of Buddhism, which now survives only outside China.
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