

Tunisia now, Tun-isia next?
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The Tunisian people's ousting of the hated Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali regime reminds all us opponents of criminal governments that it's high time to rid Malaysia of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his successors in the BN gang.

Seeing the Tun flying off to a well-deserved retirement in Saudi Arabia and his thieving, conniving successors, confederates and cronies out of office and on trial for their crimes against the nation would be a democrat's dream come true.

But admittedly it doesn't appear to be too likely any time soon. Malaysia missed what seemed a golden opportunity to rid itself of the Tun, Tunisia style, when so many citizens proved too confused, cautious or chicken to support the Reformasi movement back in the late 1990s.

Since then the survivors and successors of Mahathirism have had 10 extra years to continue their looting of the nation's wealth and corruption of its institutions, and the Tun himself has been around to help perpetuate his poisonous legacy.

And however many disappointments the Malaysian populace has suffered in this time; however many billions of public money squandered, embezzled, stolen and stashed away overseas; however many lives lost through police brutality; however many major crimes committed and condoned by the powers that be, the majority seem happy to keep copping it.

Or so it seems, as long as BN can still bribe and bully enough voters to support its candidates in buy-elections, as in the current 'contest' in Tenang.

So accustomed are Malaysians to atrocities committed against them by BN, apparently, that many or even most seem incapable of seeing the latest one as the final straw.

In Tunisia, the straw that broke the proverbial camel's back was the suicide by self-immolation of a young man unjustly targeted by the police. But in Malaysia, or, for the purposes of this column, Tun-isia, many if not most citizens seem content to tolerate a very similar case, the death of Teoh Beng Hock in MACC custody.

The finding by an 18-month coroner's enquiry that Teoh's suspicious death was "neither suicide nor homicide" has apparently inspired no particular protest by the nation's lawyers, or any outpouring of popular outrage on the streets or in polling stations.

Similarly, the victimisation of senior journalist and National Union of Journalists president Hata Wahari, though no doubt privately decried by many, brought not a murmur of public protest from his colleagues in the mainstream press, let alone a public march or industrial strike in his support.

And when it comes to protesting against the outrageously racist and religionist antics of BN-sponsored 'newspaper' Utusan Malaysia and Malay-supremacist pressure-group Perkasa, moderate Malaysians are rendered silent by BN threats of a repeat of the deadly riots of

May 13.

They forget, or fail to recall, that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is the son of Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, the man who allegedly fomented the events of May 13, 1969 for the purpose of deposing and replacing Malaysia's founding premier Tunku Abdul Rahman.

And in any event, let's face it, BN's so-called law enforcers have been waging a gradual or slow-motion May 13 for years, in the process killing far more non-Malay detainees and 'suspects' than there were casualties in the original riots.

Expectations check

Another of the killings that stands out as justifying a Tunisia-style popular revolt against Malaysia's Tun-isian BN government, is that of the murder of Mongolian translator Altantuya Shaariibuu.

This case was and remains riddled with so many glaring mysteries and inconsistencies that it would have destroyed any even marginally-respectable ruling coalition.

From the official pre-trial declaration that there were definitely only three suspects involved, through the unexplained erasure of the victim's immigration records to Najib's swearing on the Quran that he had no knowledge of or involvement in the crime, the entire affair was a national and international outrage.

But far from spelling doom to Tun-isia - or should that really be Tun-Asia? - this monumental scandal didn't even deter the Tun from supporting Najib as the replacement for his hand-picked successor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

So, all things considered, I and my fellow political optimists shouldn't get our hopes up too much that the revolution in Tunisia will have any marked effect on the situation in Tun's Malaysia.

In fact, far from revolution or even evolution, the nation seems hell-bent on a process of devolution. It is sinking slowly but surely down the corruption rankings, while rising to the heights in illicit financial outflows.

And from this week it looks set to sink still lower in the media-freedom stakes, with the pending announcement by Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein on new Internet sedition guidelines.

Unfortunately the deadline for this column won't wait for the big announcement. But going by BN's previous record of bringing the charge of sedition against its critics, notably the self-exiled Raja Petra Kamarudin, it won't be good news for us virtual BN-bashers.

Opposition to BN is not sedition, of course, as BN is just the coalition of parties in government, and not the system of government itself. In fact the BN regime itself is seditious, in that it works tirelessly to corrupt and undermine Malaysia's constitution, while its critics only want it out and respectable government restored.

In other words, the loyal Malaysian opposition and its supporters are calling for the repeal of seditious laws like the Internal Security Act and the Printing Presses and Publications Act, and the cessation of 'seditious' activities like the trial of Anwar Ibrahim on a trumped-up charge.

Or, better still, the Tunisia-style removal of Mahathir and his entire coterie of BN colleagues and cronies.

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