

**Najib must get priorities right**  
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The frightening scenes of protest in Cairo with ordinary Egyptians taking a stand against the repressive regime of President Hosni Mubarak bring home the message that when the public is continually ignored, civil unrest triumphs.

The grievances felt by the Egyptian peoples sent thousands of its citizens onto the streets demanding immediate reform.

The thing that is frightening the regime is that the protestors come from a cross-section of society.

They range from the poverty-stricken Bedouin tribesman to city professionals.

Most however, are young, educated, well-articulated and middle-class, frustrated at the way their country is run.

They see a land which has few opportunities to offer, and where only the elite enjoy power.

Sounds familiar? I was describing Egypt but I could just as easily be describing Malaysia.

The Egyptians are fighting the government mainly for financial reasons. Its people face economic gloom, rising prices, rising unemployment, poor living conditions and the breakdown of law and order.

There is genuine anger at political repression and the possible rigging of elections.

In an effort to stop protests from being galvanised and driven by the young, via Internet and word of mouth, Mubarak stopped most forms of communication with the outside world.

Eventually, Facebook, Twitter and the Internet were stopped from operating. Despite this, the crowds gathered in even bigger numbers and shook off their fear of the police.

Instead of agreeing to the reforms, Mubarak sacked his entire cabinet. What the crowd wanted was for him to go.

The response of the authorities has been brutal and the police have tried to drive back the crowds with water-cannon, rubber bullets and tear gas grenades.

**Watch on Egypt**

The rest of the Arab world is watching Egypt, to see how Mubarak deals with the unrest. The outcome of the Egyptian uprising will affect the rest of the Muslim world. Already similar demonstrations have begun in Yemen, Algeria and Jordan.

One Egyptian protestor who was trapped by police lines explained why he was out on the streets: "It's not about salary or money. I have three children. I am here on their behalf, because I want them to have a future."

Although some units of the army did attack the civilians, many others signalled agreement with the protesters, by giving the 'thumbs-up' sign. Soldiers have greater loyalty to the country than to a corrupt politician.

This Egyptian uprising resembles that of the Iranian uprising in 1979, which sparked the revolution. At the time, the Shah of Iran was known to be corrupt, had lined his pockets, was ruthless against political opposition and was known to be a puppet of the west.

When Iran fell, the young thought they could control their future but within months, the radical Muslims unleashed their forces and formed the Islamic Republic.

Egypt is considered an ally of the United States. Recent reports have shown that the USA, although seen to be publicly backing Mubarak, has been secretly funding leading figures in the struggle for regime change, over the past few years.

Malaysia is no Egypt (or is it?). We, too, were told recently by Hillary Clinton (right) that we were a 'role model nation'.

The Deputy Prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin returned to Malaysia after his whirlwind tour of America, feeling very pleased with himself.

Malaysians have legitimate concerns about the state of our nation.

Mega projects are being proposed when there is no obvious funding for them. Corruption is rife but only the small cases are being solved.

The forces of law and order have broken down - witness the death of A Kugan, Teoh Beng Hock and Aminulrasyid Amzah. Many villages are lacking in proper infrastructure and yet skyscrapers and palaces are being constructed.

The illicit outflows of funds totalling US\$291 billion or RM881 billion during the period 2000 to 2009, which the Global Financial Integrity report revealed, does not merit any attention by our ministers.

Allegations of rape and other crimes by the cabinet are shrugged off with denials. People who protest are picked up and detained without trial. Opposition politicians are harassed.

Before leaving for the United Arab Emirates, Prime minister Najib Abdul Razak tried to create a smokescreen when he ordered Home minister Hishammuddin Hussein to investigate Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim for terrorist links with the Muslim Brotherhood, as part of the attempt to discredit Anwar further.

Najib conveniently ignored a CNN report which absolved Anwar and his Pakatan Rakyat party from having any terrorist links in the middle-east.

Najib also failed to inform the public, last August, it was he who had deceived the Saudi Arabia authorities into thinking that two of their royal princes were funding Anwar in the upcoming elections.

When the Saudis completed their investigations, they cleared Anwar but uncovered something far more unsettling.

Despite Anwar's name having been cleared, Najib wanted to create the impression that Anwar is linked to terrorism.

This sort of news will alarm any non-Malays and liberal Muslims. For them, a Muslim-run state is one thing, but a fundamentalist Muslim state is another matter altogether.

### **'National security compromised'**

Hishammuddiin said that the investigation into Anwar was because national security was compromised by the involvement of terrorist organisations.

Strange that when Anwar first mentioned Najib's links with Apco, a company with strong Israeli links, especially as the Malaysian government has no diplomatic relations with Israel, no investigation was carried out by the Home Ministry.

Najib is desperate to make Anwar look terrible in the eyes of the public. Last year, Utusan accused Anwar of paying CNN to feature him in their show 'Connect the World', watched by hundreds of millions around the world. This charge was denied by the US news broadcaster.

Nor did Najib mention that his wife Rosmah Mansor (right) was alleged to have paid US\$5 million, from the public purse, for her centrefold 'First Lady' glossy advert in the New York Times.

It appears that in Malaysia, the opposition is continually undermined and democratic values and good governance take second place to party politics.

Earlier this month, we saw the swift conclusion of the Jasmine revolution in Tunisia which toppled President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali. The Tunisians may have cheered the removal of President Ben Ali but their invective was reserved for his wife, Leila, who was hated for her greed.

Leila was given the soubriquet of "The Philippines' Imelda Marcos of the Arab world" because of her love of wealth and its trappings. She was also branded 'The Regent of Carthage' as she was seen as the power behind the throne.