

Najib shows his true colours
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Only a crazed and morally corrupt leader would suggest that members of the Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) were hoping the police would use force on them, to prove that the Malaysian government was brutal and autocratic.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak made the suggestion after scores of people were arrested in a dawn swoop on leaders and members of the Human Rights Party (HRP). Roadblocks were erected around Kuala Lumpur and the city centre was in 'lockdown' in a bid to stop the 'anti-racism' rally.

The rally was to protest against the controversial 'Interlok' novel by national laureate Abdullah Hussain. 'Interlok' had been criticised for its racial slurs and stereotypes about non-Malay communities.

For once in his career, Najib is right: the police did use excessive force and the Malaysian BN government is brutal and autocratic.

By 8am HRP leader P Uthayakumar (centre in pic) and over a hundred people had been arrested.

It is despicable of Najib to accuse Hindraf of a deliberate ploy, calculated to bring negative worldwide publicity for Malaysia.

Later that day, Najib criticised Hindraf in front of Felda settlers: "We don't want to use force, but they are hoping we will do so as they want to exploit the situation by painting a bad picture of Malaysia through international television channels."

Hypocrisy is evident

The hypocrisy of Najib's motives is evident. Earlier last week, he advised the rulers of the Arabian and north African states to listen to the desires of their people, as they showed a "clear sign of their demand for change and reform".

At that time, Najib (left) was on an official visit to Istanbul to boost bilateral economic cooperation and mutual investments. He even warned Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi to refrain from using violence against protestors opposing his rule. He advised both sides to adopt a peaceful transition to change.

"We believe that he should not use violence," said Najib. "What is important for us is to take into account the aspirations of people. The system should be legitimate, it has to be based on support of people."

Najib appeared unperturbed by the suggestion of similar uprisings occurring in Malaysia.

When ex-president Hosni Mubarak of Egypt was ousted from office, Najib quashed any suggestion of parallels between Egypt and Malaysia. He believed that his "people first" policies were a strong feature of his administration. Moreover, he said that elections in Malaysia were "quite free and fair" and that support for his party was increasing.

Najib said, "I believe that the people are with us. We must understand that not all problems can be solved immediately but we are taking steps to address them."

We must allow BN time to solve these problems. They have had over 53 years - a short time in which to achieve anything!

Najib had even vowed to increase his engagement with Malaysians because he was aware they used social networking sites to express outrage at the corruption and other vices that are endemic in Malaysian politics.

Despite his earlier rhetoric about wanting greater engagement with the rakyat, his order to arrest the leaders and members of HRP has revealed Najib's true colours.

During the middle-east uprisings, the PM and members of his cabinet tried not to show their fear of similar unrest here. Their unprecedented media focus on warning us about copycat demonstrations served to reveal their true anxieties.

This weekend, Najib and his cousin, Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein, conspired to arrange for mass arrests, and the setting up of several road-blocks on roads leading to the city centre.

Having arrested the people, Hishammuddin then had the gall to proclaim that the planned demonstration had failed because of the "poor response from the people and that the few who gathered at Batu Caves were there for a religious event and not for a street demonstration".

He blamed them for violating the law and inconveniencing the public.

It was believed that the actions of the police were indiscriminate as they appeared to stop and arrest anyone suspected of being a HRP supporter, especially Indians who were found walking along the streets of Kuala Lumpur.

Panic and unease

The policemen's panic and unease caused them to stop several innocent passers-by who had their bags checked despite having nothing to do with the rally. Reporters covering the event were also arrested. It wasn't just the police who felt threatened.

Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin called for firm police action against those participating in the march. He seemed to forget that the federal constitution guarantees its citizens the right to a peaceful assembly. Moreover, it has not escaped people's attention that extremist groups like Perkasa can organise marches without any problems.

In Kepala Batas, former prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi also criticised Hindraf and said their demonstration was politically motivated.

He said, "If their actions now are the same as when I was prime minister, they might also want to split the vote. This is by getting Indians not to support Barisan Nasional but the opposition."

outside Jinjang 6pm Incidentally, Najib claimed that the Indian community did not need Hindraf because the government was capable of looking after the interests of the Indians.

He said, "With regard to the issues faced by the Indian community, we have resolved many of these issues."

If BN has helped the Indian community, then why are the Indians still amongst the hard-core poor? Many Indians on the estates and plantations do not possess identity cards or birth-certificates. Without the necessary papers, they cannot enrol their children in school, get hospital treatment or apply for a bank loan, if they were lucky to reach that stage.

Cycle of violence and poverty

They live in a cycle of violence and poverty and few, escape the trap. Two or more generations of Indians have been failed by BN.

The question many Indians (and Malays and Chinese) have is: "What has BN done for me after 53 years? The same promises are offered again and again at every election, but never delivered."

The 'Interlok' march had apparently puzzled Najib. He asked, "Why the need to hold a demonstration and why at KLCC?"

Perhaps it is because the twin towers represent corruption and hypocrisy? Or racism and unfairness? Or nepotism and lack of freedom? Or the twin horns of 'The Devil' rising from the ground to pluck Najib to an eternity of torture and pain in the fires of Hell.

The list is endless.

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