

## **'Yellow M'sians' vs BN: M'sia at a standstill?**

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The events in the next few days would give us an idea as to how the police would treat the "yellow Malaysians" who would gather for the indoor rally.

It's now confirmed that the Bersih 2.0 rally, which calls for free and fair elections, would be held at a stadium. But the rally organizers have their demands - to hold the rally at Stadium Merdeka, set-up a Royal Commission of Inquiry on the electoral process and release all detainees, including those arrested under the Emergency Ordinance.

But yellow T-shirts are still deemed illegal and Bersih remains an unlawful organisation. How would Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak negotiate with an unlawful organisation? Beats me.

Sometimes, government leaders cannot get it right. In Malaysia, we have been seeing this over the last two weeks.

Najib and Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein plus the whole Barisan Nasional government are clearly jittery.

Thanks to the inefficiency of the government, we are moving backwards as a nation. Clamping down on legitimate dissent, jailing activists, nabbing people for wearing a T-shirt, getting panicky over street protests - these are not the marks of a progressive nation.

All the weaknesses of Barisan Nasional's shoddy administration, which gave the opposition its historic win in 2008, are also present as I write this - discontent among the urban and rural folks, soaring prices, repression of democratic rights, arbitrary arrests... the list could go on.

### **All signs point to a major clampdown**

But instead of looking into issues that affect Malaysians, the government is again using its police goons and manipulating the law to repress people.

I am playing a guessing game here - the other possible developments in the next days could include the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) suspending or closing down blogs; Internet-based news portals being disrupted as had happened during the Sarawak election and your faithful mobile phone operators doing a number on its clients. I am yet to exhaust my list.

One has to only read the headline news on Tuesday to play my guessing game. The whole "weapons being found ahead of rally" drama is plain stupid. I would think the police would have better brains - didn't we all see the Molotov cocktails? The bottles were so clean and the "parang" glittering.

If the police do not stop barging in on private meetings held by Bersih 2.0 organisers and eyeing everyone with suspicion, we could conclude they would flex their muscles come Saturday. So no yellow T-shirts, shoes, ties, hair bands, plastic flowers.

This morning - despite Bersih agreeing to move its rally to a stadium - the police erected roadblocks along major roads in the Klang Valley including Shah Alam and Klang, causing massive peak-hour traffic congestions. I understand three more people were arrested this morning for wearing the yellow Bersih T-shirts.

### **All signs point to a major clampdown in the next few days.**

We know that domestic politics have a strong impact on foreign investment. The latest report by Global Investment Trend Monitor, a publication of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development,

shows the 2010 FDI figure for Malaysia at USD 7billion.

In comparison, Indonesia received US\$12.8 billion while Hong Kong and Singapore's FDI stands at US\$62.6 billion and US\$37.4 billion respectively. Thailand, with its political upheaval, received US\$6.8 billion.

Clearly someone has to tell the government that it needs to buck up for the revival of the economy. There must be a clear injection of accountability into the administration for investors to come. Using the police to do its dirty work, back door deals to stem healthy dissent, a complete disregard for the law and suppression of democratic rights are all overkill.

Besides this, allowing belligerent politicians to play the race card would only see to the continued nose-diving of foreign investment in the country. The very fact that some politicians use the racial bogeyman to create chaos, knowing it would lead to people harming each other on the streets, shows the failure of the government to instill racial harmony in the real sense.

The victory clinched by the Bersih 2.0 rally organisers demonstrates the people's power. The government has to respect the aspirations of the people. Or it would become even more irrelevant than before.

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