

Najib is losing the plot - again
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The success stories of Indonesia and Turkey as two economically vibrant and yet democratically flourishing countries have effectively broken down the Asian Values once propagated forcefully by Mahathir Mohamad and Lee Kuan Yew and readily embraced by the Chinese Communist Party.

Too bad the Malaysian government remains intransigent in thinking that any public challenge to its authority would result in chaos and bloodshed. Najib Abdul Razak - still an apprentice because he has yet to secure a popular mandate as prime minister - is so bankrupt of ideas that he has been compelled to resort to fear tactics.

As Montesquieu argues passionately: the principle of despotism is fear.

Ever since Bersih 2.0 announced its plan to rally on July 9, the mainstream media has been demonising it as an attempt to create havoc.

The Malaysian public has also been witnessing a phenomenon that will not be condoned - much less accepted - by a democracy in its real sense: Utusan Malaysia, New Straits Times, The Star, Berita Harian and Sin Chew Daily churn out one article after another warning against the "illegal assembly", even insinuating it as riot-inducing. Oddly enough, the eight demands by Bersih 2.0 are either buried into insignificance or completely blacked out.

Bersih 2.0 leader Ambiga Sreenevasan has been facing all sorts of accusations from day one, exacerbated by vicious attacks on her gender, religion and ethnicity and even death threats. But she stands firm and maintains elegance even when rebuking and rebutting her detractors one by one.

Ambiga's fortitude, courage and dignity not only bring pride and honour back to the much discredited datukship but also put her opponents to utter shame - though they may refuse to realise it.

Still, the mainstream media "professionals" play dumb and continue with their "critical assessments" of the situation, as if Bersih 2.0 will be held solely responsible should something untoward descend on the upcoming Saturday. There is virtually nothing in the press to acknowledge Ambiga's fair-mindedness, let alone do her justice.

Who, really, are the potential begetters of violence? They are Ibrahim Ali and his thuggish followers, as well as the Pertuhuan Seni Silat Lincah Malaysia, which had issued threats to Bersih 2.0 and yet was endorsed by Najib.

All laws not created equal

Bersih 2.0 supporters are urged by the mainstream media to abide by the law. In their logic, if Article 27 of the Police Act states one must first secure a permit for a rally, doing otherwise is tantamount to undermining the rule of law.

What rule of law are these senior journalists talking about? Malaysia is practically ruled by law.

Freedom of speech and the right to peaceful assembly are enshrined in the federal constitution, but the Barisan Nasional government flagrantly suppresses people's freedom of thought and action and ignores the separation of powers. The more it acts, the more it contravenes the constitution.

Must all laws - regardless of their nature and form - be upheld? This is nothing but feudalism.

In the past, Malaysian citizens could easily seek judicial review from the court of law whenever a dispute over legislation or government act arises. How important is judicial review? According to Lord

Browne-Wilkinson, a former head of the Privy Council in Britain:

"Its social importance is self-evident. Growth in executive interference in the lives of individuals, inevitable in a modern state, has exposed us all to the risk that executive power may be exercised in an unbridled or abusive manner. If, as some thought, the common law had proved so senile and impotent that it could not develop to meet this change in society, the rule of law would not have regulated administrative action. Governments are not notorious for introducing legislation which limits their own powers. Happily, the common law has proved to be fertile, not impotent."

Unfortunately, Mahathir's authoritarian rule only served to strengthen executive powers, weaken legislative control, and erode judicial integrity. Therefore, most - if not all - judicial review cases brought to court in the hope of declaring actions carried out under the Police Act or the Internal Security Act unconstitutional only end in failure.

Meanwhile, it is increasingly common for civil rights campaigners or political activists to be denied access to legal counsel when detained, with their request for judicial review dismissed by the court.

Yes, rule of law as such is as good as rule of man. Burma too has law, and will these "media professionals" adhere to it? With lavish perks and grandiose offices, perhaps they will.

True to his dodgy character, Najib went back on his words and denied having made the offer to have the Bersih rally held in a stadium. Enraging the public further, the sentiments are now too strong to be halted.

With the country exposed to "communist threat, foreign infiltration and opposition conspiracy", Najib is adamant that his trips to London and Rome must proceed and he will be leaving the country later today.

Is he frightened of the massive turnout against the government expected tomorrow? Is he leaving his cousin Hishammuddin Hussein - whose degrees in law are 'hard earned' as toilet papers - in charge to test his capability as home minister? Or is it Rosmah Mansor who simply cannot wait to go on another spending spree in Europe? Maybe all of the above.

In any case, the splinters within Umno over the peaceful Bersih 2.0 rally have thoroughly debunked Najib's 1Malaysia myth, rendering him a head of government bereft of integrity and leadership.

In light of Najib's mendacity, Malaysians who agree with the agenda for clean and fair elections must come out in force to send an unequivocal message to the government that, with Najib in charge, there can be no trust.

See you all tomorrow.

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