

**Guardian tells Najib to ditch Mubarak model**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**July 14, 2011**

"Bilateral trade and investment is important. Respect for basic human rights more so," opined a senior editor of Britain's The Guardian newspaper, Simon Tisdall, calling the Malaysian government "gormless" and chiding it for "strong-armed tactics" in quashing the Bersih 2.0 rally last Saturday.

The newspaper's op-ed said that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, who is scheduled to have a lunch meeting with British Prime Minister David Cameron, warned of global resistance as Najib had "reacted with characteristic heavy-handedness" toward participants of the rally.

"It is not in the same league as Arab spring uprisings in Egypt and elsewhere. But Malaysia's fancifully named 'hibiscus revolution' has potential, at least, to inflict a winter of discontent on the gormless government of Najib.

"That's something Cameron should bear in mind when Najib comes touting for business in Downing Street on Thursday (today)," said Tisdall, the assistant editor and a foreign affairs columnist of The Guardian.

Citing media reports of the crackdown on the protest where the riot police charged at the crowd using batons, tear gas and water cannons to break up a "peaceful protest", Tisdall raised concern over the late Baharudin Ahmad, a protester who allegedly died while escaping the tear gas.

The clampdown on the rally, explained Tisdall, which urged for an end to a "defective electoral system" was to ensure Najib's party Umno continues to "stays in power indefinitely".

"This violent repression ... flies in the face of international human rights standards and cannot be allowed to continue. David Cameron should tell Prime Minister Najib that these human rights violations are unacceptable," he said, quoting Amnesty International (AI).

"The protests, the product of rising tensions linked to mooted early elections, spending cuts and political upheavals in neighbouring Thailand and Singapore, echo events across the Muslim world.

"Many of the participants were reportedly younger-generation Malaysians kicking back against establishment cronyism, curbs on public assembly and debate, and state-imposed censorship considered draconian even by regional standards," said Tisdall.

**'Najib's threats seem ill-advised'**

He also pointed out that demands for Najib to quit, is gaining momentum as more than 172,000 people had expressed support for the suggestion.

"Far from admitting fault, Najib has threatened more strong-arm tactics if the demonstrations continue," he said, adding that Najib had also issued a threat, saying Umno could muster millions to counter Bersih.

Such threats seem ill-advised. When elected in 2009, Najib promised to bridge Malaysia's political, ethnic and religious divisions. Now he's in danger of exacerbating them, as his old boss, Mahathir Mohamed, suggested in a recent interview.

Bersih's July 9 rally, he said, gives Cameron and other European leaders leverage over Malaysia, "should they choose to use it".

"Malaysia's leaders should wake up and smell the coffee. Led intelligently and openly, Malaysia could be a paradigm for south-east Asia. Led repressively, it could fall apart. Najib must get on the right side of history. The Mubarak model doesn't work," he added.

He advised the government to learn the lessons from its South-East Asian neighbours where activists continue to challenge the ruling elites for change.

“Malaysia is not on the verge of revolution, hibiscus-coloured or otherwise. Relatively speaking, it is more stable, homogenous and prosperous than other Muslim or Arab countries currently experiencing popular turmoil.

“But it is not politically immune to the international zeitgeist, any more than it's economy is immune to global trends,” warned Tisdall.

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