

Umno stifles dissent as general election looms

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MP SPEAKS The water dragon year, according to the Chinese lunar calendar, is special. It happens once in every 60 years and therefore considered auspicious.

The dragon is ferocious, strong and believed to signify changes. In the case of Malaysia, changes we need pronto.

NONE The recent disruption of an Anything But Umno (ABU) rally clearly shows that we need to boot out the current regime.

Enough of calling for reforms within the existing system of government. The rampant graft, cronyism and greed is so institutionalised in Umno and its coalition partners that no revamp is possible.

The use of rowdies to beat up people and stop the rally shows that the Umno-led coalition government would do any trapeze artist act to stay in power.

Any leader who wants democracy and a just government would allow for the dissemination of information.

Those who want to stay in power to exploit the wealth of the nation while empowering and enriching their family and friends would not be able to fight the urge to disrupt talks and meetings to stem the flow of information to the people.

The reaction of the Selangor police chief Tun Hisan Tun Hamzah further caricatures the decay of administration in the country.

Tun Hisan was quick to gloss over the incident saying that nothing had happened and the hick-up was caused by unhappy residents.

The police force has the responsibility to act in a just manner to uphold law and order. It is not there to take sides or go to the mat for Umno and its cronies.

We have seen blatant discrimination acted out by the police in Malaysia - they nab peaceful protesters, beat them up and use tear gas and water canon to cow people into submission.

That's not all. The uniformed bully-boys show their authority on the detainees by whacking them to a pulp, resulting in custodial deaths. When questioned, top-ranking police officers sing Tun Hisan's tune.

NONE While the government has chosen to distance itself from the display of violence at the ABU rally, the rakyat know the truth.

We have seen, over the last months, the desperation of the government to flex every possible muscle to silence the opposition, disparage civil society, hoodwink the public through rhetoric and scheme strategies to keep its reins on power.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's self-styled campaign peppered with claims of opening up the democratic space in the country, allowing for greater rights and putting the needs of the people first are nothing but propaganda, targeted at regaining the confidence of the people.

Failure to uphold civil liberties

This was cleverly captured in Human Rights Watch's World Report 2012, where it notes that the premier

fell short in his pledges to “uphold civil liberties” and build a “functional and inclusive democracy”.

Asia deputy director Phil Robertson, further said that “Malaysia’s leaders are fooling themselves by thinking they can backtrack on public promises to respect the rights to demonstrate peacefully and criticise the government without fear” alluding to the Peaceful Assembly Bill that further encroaches into the civil rights of the people.

I was cautious about celebrating the acquittal of Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim. Most people smelled a rat when the surprise court decision came about. And as expected, an appeal has been filed.

One would think that Najib would play smart as opposed to disguising political drama as reforms. His strategy is merely short-term and targeted at convincing the people to vote the government in again at the next general polls, widely expected to be held in March this year.

NONE Once he secures a fresh term, Anwar could be found guilty and sent to languish in jail. The plot sounds familiar - its about demonising the opposition and getting rid of vocal voices.

The trial of DAP chairperson Karpal Singh (left in photo) emits the same stench. He has been ordered to enter his defence by the Court of Appeal for allegedly using seditious words against the Perak sultan three years ago.

Persecuting political rivals

These appeals paint Najib as a political weakling who, time and again, backpedals on promised reforms to cater to the demands of Umno warlords.

By flip-flopping on his rallying cry for reforms, the prime minister blatantly shows that he is pandering to the conservative elements within his own political party.

Malaysia does not need an indecisive prime minister. We do not need a party which is corrupt to the core and would not hesitate to stir up racial sentiments to be at the helm of power.

The rakyat do not need Barisan Nasional leaders who only care about lining their pockets.

Malaysians do not need to put up with more sex allegations, let alone keep witnessing the unfolding of political game play in the court house.

We cannot allow Najib to play the role of mafia bosses who, in the movie ‘Casino’, eliminate all their opponents. Neither can we allow him his perverse pleasures of clipping the rights of the rakyat and persecuting his political rivals.

The next general election is crucial as it would determine the future of our children and the nation. As such, let’s use our voting power to show Barisan Nasional the exit.

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