

The Economist: Attacks on Ambiga may hurt PM
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The persistent attacks against Bersih 2.0 co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan might tarnish Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, said influential international magazine The Economist.

In an article that appeared in this week's Asia edition, the magazine said Umno underlings' demonising campaign is to likely to undo Najib's effort to brand himself as a liberal champion of multiracial politics.

The magazine notes that Najib failed to speak up against the attacks, but at the most only mildly reprimanded Sri Gading MP Mohamad Aziz who wanted Ambiga to be hanged.

"When under pressure, the 'warlords' of Umno who constitute its nationalist backbone have often drawn on racial politics.

"(They) play up to Malay voters the supposed threats that Chinese and Indians pose to their institutionalised privileges in jobs and education.

"Under Mr Najib people had hoped for something better. Ms Ambiga (left) accuses him of being 'wet' for failing to take a stronger stand.

"His belated rebuttal of Mr Mohamad merely urged MPs not to say things that might 'hurt the feelings of other races'," read the article.

Mohamad was among the long list of examples the article drew on to illustrate how those aligned to the federal government have been targeting her of late.

On June 26, Mohamad had asked in Parliament if Ambiga should be sentenced to hang for treason. He grudgingly retracted the remark two days later.

Indian votes affected?

Other examples cited by the magazine includes a group of Malay burgers flipping beef burgers in front of her house.

"Silly stuff, though still offensive to a Hindu vegetarian.

"Sillier still, a group of ex-soldiers marched on her house and shook their buttocks at it, calling her a subversive," the article said.

The article quickly established that the attacks against Ambiga are overtly racist.

"Ms Ambiga believes the attacks on her, all by Malay men, are racist.

"She points out that her Malay co-leader of Bersih, a famous writer called A Samad Said, has never been targeted," the article said.

It noted that the Indian community had reacted negatively to the pressures faced by Ambiga, suggesting that BN's Indian vote may be affected.

"After the BN's Indian vote fell at the last election in 2008, Mr Najib worked hard to court Indians. Now, that may have been to little avail," the article added.

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