

The advent of Najib's new despotism

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MP SPEAKS The flurry of arbitrary arrests and selective prosecution of Pakatan Rakyat leaders, including Members of Parliament and state assemblypersons, in the run-up to the 57th Merdeka celebrations on Aug 31, mark the advent of a new despotism in the Malaysian political landscape.

Today alone, PKR vice president and MP for Pandan Rafizi Ramli (right) and PKR MP for Padang Serai N Surendran were in court to face criminal charges.

The former for the new-fangled accusation of “defamatory and provocative” statements against Umno members under Section 504 of the Penal Code and the latter a second charge of sedition within 10 days in connection with the Court of Appeal’s ruling that reversed Anwar Ibrahim’s acquittal in his second sodomy trial.

The last ten days have seen another Pakatan Rakyat MP and two state assemblypersons hauled to court with PAS MP for Shah Alam Khalid Samad and DAP Penang assemblyperson for Seri Delima RSN Rayer charged for sedition and the PAS Perak state assemblyperson for Changkat Jering Nizar Jamaluddin charged with criminal defamation of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

Other Pakatan MPs who are facing trial for sedition include DAP MP for Seputeh Teresa Kok and PKR MP for Batu Tian Chua.

If the BN government gets it ways to secure not only conviction but also a disqualifying sentence of either fine of over RM2,000 or one year’s jail, it would mean five parliamentary by-elections, namely Seputeh, Batu, Pandan, Padang Serai and Shah Alam and two state assembly by-elections, vis a vis Seri Delima in Penang and Changkat Jering in Perak.

If we include the possibility of a by-election in Permatang Pauh if Anwar fails in his appeal at the Federal Court on October 28 and 29, then we are looking at the likelihood of six parliamentary and two state assembly by-elections as a result of the recent spate of arrests and prosecution of PR leaders.

PM's rule rich in irony

It is the height of irony that Najib had announced in July 2012 that the Sedition Act would be abolished as part of his National Transformation Plan to make Malaysia the “best democracy in the world” but in actual fact, Najib is setting a record in invoking the Sedition Act against MPs and assemblypersons, putting to shame Dr Mahathir Mohamad’s (left) 22-year “dark age” as prime minister.

Five MPs (including the late Karpal Singh) and one state assemblyperson had been charged

with sedition in the six-year Najib premiership while the 22-year Mahathir premiership had seen only one MP charged, jailed and disqualified as a parliamentarian - Lim Guan Eng.

Of course, Mahathir had recourse to the notorious detention-without-trial Internal Security Act but this is no excuse for the advent under the Najib premiership of a new despotism against democratic liberties through resort to Sedition Act and a panoply of undemocratic and repressive laws.

It is not just the Attorney-General Abdul Gani Patail and Najib who must be held responsible for the new despotism in Malaysia, but all the cabinet ministers and all the BN component parties and leaders who must either disassociate themselves from the democratic regressions or must be held, whether as principals or as having aided and abetted in the new despotism in Malaysia.

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