

**Alas, Najib is repeating Dr M's mistake**  
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COMMENT When Anwar Ibrahim ignited the Reformasi movement in the aftermath of his unceremonious exit from power, it was Dr Mahathir Mohamad and then police chief Abdul Rahim Noor who ensured that the fire would continue to rage even after he was thrown into the slammer.

Instead of dealing with the situation tactfully, the Federal Reserve Unit (FRU) donned helmets and shields to battle protesters in the streets of Kuala Lumpur.

Batons came crashing down, tear gas canisters were lobbed and water cannons rained chemical-laced liquid on thousands of Anwar supporters.

The protesters were chased through shopping malls and into LRT stations. They were clobbered while the former inspector-general of police socked Anwar in the eye, leaving it black and blue.

This fanned the anger of the people and paved the way for a movement that would eventually turn into votes for the opposition, nudging it to within striking distance to dislodge Umno from power more than a decade later.

And now, PM Najib Abdul Razak and the current police chief, Khalid Abu Bakar, appear to be repeating the mistake.

Once again, Anwar is behind bars.

But this time there are no FRU men on the streets, no batons, tear gas or water cannons. Instead the police arrest alleged ring leaders of the protests.

Over the past months since Najib declared that the Sedition Act would not be repealed, opposition politicians and civil society leaders are being nabbed on a regular basis.

However, on Monday the police have shot themselves in the foot by arresting Anwar's daughter Nurul Izzah and worse still, detained her overnight.

This portrays the government as vindictive without a single compassionate bone in the system.

Even Umno lawmaker Nur Jazlan Mohamed, one of the brighter bulbs among those in the government bench, lamented that the arrest would make the Lembah Pantai MP a hero.

**Giant slayer**

A political greenhorn, Nurul was forced into the limelight after her father's sacking in 1998.

Eloquent, well-groomed, attractive and courageous, she won over the hearts of Malaysians. She was hailed as the Princess of Reformasi.

When she eventually ventured into politics, she slew giants in the form of Shahrizat Abdul Jalil and Raja Nong Chik Zainal Abidin in the contest for the coveted Lembah Pantai seat in Kuala Lumpur.

She is a politician admired by all Malaysians, irrespective of race and religion. There is a special place in their hearts for her.

Now a mother of two, her incarceration has definitely hit a raw nerve that could have a telling effect in the next general election.

The move also drew international condemnation, especially when the police are seen to be dragging their feet on reports lodged against ruling politicians.

The government would be making a dreadful mistake if it sees the opposition floundering based on the relatively smaller numbers for the KitaLawan protests over the past few weekends.

Many Malaysians have resolved that rallies cannot decisively bring about change and therefore opted to stay at home.

However, they will express their dissatisfaction and anger at the ballot box.