

Umno's Yellow Streak
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The Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein, just like his Umno colleagues, has displayed a streak of yellow in these past few weeks, in response to the Bersih 2.0 march.

What else could explain the government's unprecedented over-reaction to Bersih's calls for electoral reform and the implementation of true democracy?

Despite the harassment of Bersih's leaders, the arrests of social activists, opposition politicians and anyone who dares to wear the yellow Bersih T-shirts, Bersih committee member Maria Chin Abdullah has remained defiant and warned that Bersih's Walk for Democracy will proceed as planned, on 9th July.

Maria said, "They (the government) can use preventive measures, which they have already threatened to use, but the rally is not about individuals in Bersih 2.0".

She emphasized that the rakyat was ready to accept change and added, "Even if they catch all (the leaders), this is a citizens' call for (electoral) reform."

Early on Wednesday, Hishammuddin had declared that the yellow Bersih T-shirts were illegal and ordered those who were wearing and selling them, to be arrested.

When he found that the rakyat was not deterred and they started to wear yellow T-shirts and yellow coloured items to promote the rally, these people were hauled up for questioning and charged with supporting an illegal assembly.

Hishammuddin should reconsider his decision. Members of Malaysian royalty parade around in nothing but yellow garments. Could their penchant for wearing yellow be misconstrued for supporting Bersih? Will Hishammuddin arrest them?

Will school pupils be arrested for travelling in yellow school buses?

Hishammuddin is trying his best to please his masters. Despite his claim that he is safeguarding the interests and security of the nation, nothing could be further from the truth.

Hishammuddin is only protecting his own interests and also those of Umno/BN and their cronies.

If the rakyat is successful in pushing through Bersih's eight point reforms, then the future of these privileged few is dim.

Umno only opposes Bersih 2 because it knows that it would not win an election in which it did not cheat.

This is what Hishammuddin fears the most. So, perhaps, the colour yellow has more significance and more relevance to him and Umno.

Hishammuddin, his cousin, the Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, and all those in Umno/BN have been responsible for the downward spiral in Malaysia's governance and the obstruction of democracy in Malaysia.

It is the people behind Umno whom Hishammuddin has to shield from the rakyat's onslaught; not national security or civil society.

The Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Ismail Omar said that over 100 people have been arrested since the weekend and that 45 of them were still in custody, for supporting the Bersih rally and for distributing Bersih paraphernalia.

He warned the public that anyone in possession of shoes, cars, buses and other 'tools' which will be used to promote the Bersih rally would risk being arrested for sedition.

Could the online media and social media sites like Facebook and Twitter also be considered tools for 'instigating' the public?

The ban of internet sites would be reminiscent of the Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings where the internet was switched off to stop people communicating with one another.

Umno should wise up to the fact that switching off various websites might incur the wrath and determination of the rakyat, just as it did in the middle-east.

Yesterday, we learnt that the crackdown had been enforced in Sabah.

As we approach the countdown towards the Bersih 2 march, similar deterrents used in the first Bersih march, have been used in an attempt to thwart participants.

Hishammuddin has called the march illegal. The police talked of a communist inspired plot and also of foreign elements plotting to overthrow the government.

The Bersih 2.0 Walk for Democracy will be a test of the rakyat's desire for change and electoral reform, after the long wait of 54 years of broken promises.

It is our last chance for several years, to stand united and demand that this government listens to us.

The chorus of Cabinet ministers charging Bersih with ISA detention or similar draconian laws, the arrests, the claim that all protests end in violence, that there is a threat to national security, smacks of desperation on Umno/BN's part.

Umno/BN know that with clear, fair and free elections, they are confident of losing.

Hence, the yellow streak displayed by each Umno/BN politician.

Malaysia calls itself a democratic nation.

How ironic that an official from the home affairs ministry of Burma, one of our ASEAN partners, told Aung San Suu Kyi that she and her party should not hold meetings, have offices or issue statements because they were breaking the law.

It all sounds very familiar doesn't it? Weren't similar threats and ultimatums given to Bersih? We might as well be ruled by a military junta.

Michelle Yeoh, who portrayed Suu Kyi in the film, "The Lady" was reportedly deported from Burma earlier this month. The protests from Wisma Putra were muted.

Naturally, they could not say much as they are guilty of the same crime – by withholding from the rakyat true democracy and proper governance and our right to clean, free and fair elections.

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