

**Pressure on Najib to change or be changed, says Time**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
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**By Debra Chong**

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 6 — International weekly Time has likened Datuk Seri Najib Razak to other authoritarian leaders in Southeast Asia and foresees sweeping reforms led by a media-savvy youth will shake up the entire region.

But the magazine said the prime minister has taken heed of the need for change and has begun initiating changes that include the repeal of outdated laws covering security and the media.

Najib has moved to reclaim his shredded reformist credentials following heavy fire from the global media over the July 9 Bersih rally crackdown. — File pic  
“Southeast Asians... know what it’s like to live under authoritarian regimes and rulers. The latter range from brutal autocrats (Burma’s recently-retired General Than Shwe) to self-styled strongmen (Cambodia’s Hun Sen) to leaders who benefit from repressive laws that safeguard the predominance of a single party (Malaysia’s Najib Razak),” the influential news magazine said in its latest issue dated October 1.

It observed too there is a rising number of youths who are social-media-savvy who are fed up with authoritarian rule and have grown bolder in saying so.

Time’s Andrew Marshall highlighted the 50,000-strong Bersih 2.0 march for free and fair elections last July 9 that saw police arrest almost 1,700 people hit with tear gas and chemical-laced water, resulting in scores hurt and an ex-soldier’s death when the authorities clamped down on the capital city.

“Protesters used Twitter and YouTube to organise the rally and, later, undermine claims that the police acted with restraint,” he wrote in his story headlined “The fire next time”.

“Prime Minister Najib, who casts himself as a moderate, seems to realise this. His party, the United Malays National Organisation, leads the National Front coalition, whose decades-old grip on power has sparked protests for electoral reform,” he said.

He noted too Najib has moved to reclaim his shredded reformist credentials following heavy fire from the global media during his European tour by announcing he was scrapping the Internal Security Act (ISA) and other security laws that allow a person to be detained indefinitely on suspected terrorism claims.

The country’s sixth prime minister has also announced sweeping changes to security and press laws, to increase civil liberties in the country.

Marshall said there was widespread doubt Najib will fulfil his promises, but added the awakened public now held the bargaining chip to determine the next person to sit in Putrajaya.

“But emboldened Malaysians will hold him to them, either at the polls — an election must be held by 2013 — or on the streets,” he concluded.

Najib, who is also finance minister, is due to table the national budget for 2012 tomorrow that is expected to include incentives and allocations to retain and regain support for the next general election widely expected by early next year.

He has said the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) needs to put winnable candidates to keep and win back federal and state seats lost in Election 2008 where the coalition lost its customary two-thirds majority in Parliament and four state governments.

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