

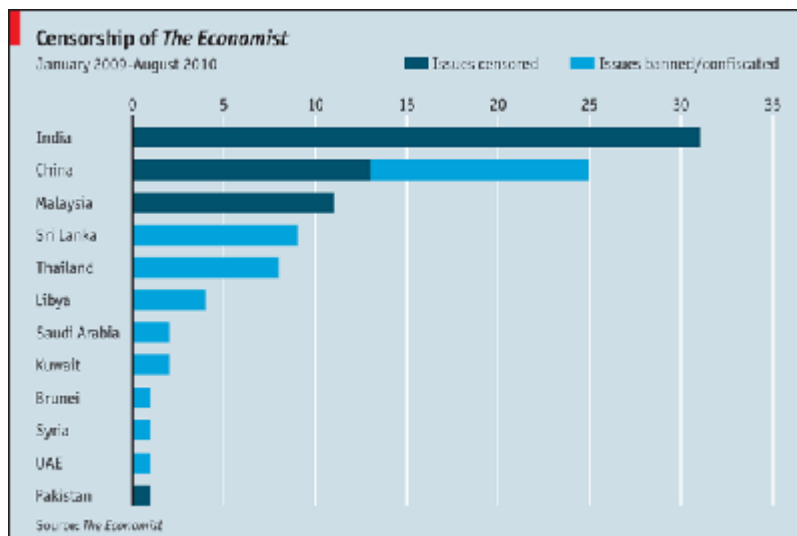
**Home Ministry censors Bersih article in The Economist**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**July 19, 2011**  
**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, July 19 — Censors have blacked out parts of an article in the latest edition of *The Economist* which had called Putrajaya’s handling of the Bersih rally overzealous, even as the Najib administration struggles to deflect the barrage of criticisms in the international media about the government crackdown.

Among the parts blacked out are mentions of the heavy-handedness of the police and the accusation that the government withdrew its offer to protesters to use a stadium for the rally.

The article titled “Taken to the cleaners — an overzealous government response to an opposition rally” chronicles the chaos on July 9 when police fired tear gas and water cannon to disperse the tens of thousands who took to the city’s streets here to demand electoral reforms.

Although the full article is available online, the Home Ministry still inked out four lines in the article, one of which notably reported on the death of one man during the rally.



The chart on censorship published in *The Economist* in September last year.

Baharuddin Ahmad, the husband of a PKR leader, collapsed while trying to escape the chaos on July 9 and has now been elevated to “hero” status by rally supporters bent on ensuring his death had not been in vain.

*The Economist* wrote “The police fired tear gas and water cannon into the crowd, and one man died of a heart attack” but the second portion of the sentence was blacked out.

The ministry also inked out three other lines in the article which spoke of “heavy-handed police tactics”, the alleged chemical bombardment on the Tung Shin Hospital which is now being investigated and how the government withdrew its stadium offer.

The blotted out parts read: "The march itself was then banned, although the authorities offered Bersih a stadium to meet in — and then withdrew the offer" and "The heavy-handed police tactics have provoked a lot of anger; the government has conceded an official investigation into claims of police brutality. In one instance (caught on film), police seemed to fire tear gas and water cannon into a hospital where protesters were sheltering from a baton charge".

According to *The Economist*, however, Malaysia has a history of censoring its articles.

In an article written last September, *The Economist* said the ministry often blacks out stories "that it judges may offend Muslims, among other things".

"Images can also prompt action. The cover of last year's Christmas issue showing Adam and Eve was censored in five countries. Malaysian officials covered up Eve's breasts," the article added.

The weekly also listed Malaysia third below India and China on its chart of the 12 countries that either censors, bans or confiscates copies of *The Economist*. The weekly is sold in 190-odd countries worldwide.

According to the chart, Malaysia has censored 11 issues between January 2009 and August 2010 while India has censored 31 issues and China has censored 13 and either banned or confiscated 12.

The Malaysian government has been portrayed as heavy-handed in the foreign media for its handling of the tumultuous Bersih rally on July 9, forcing its top leaders to launch public relations exercises to defend their image.

Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Mansor was sent to Jakarta to explain the crackdown and a letter was also penned to the influential Wall Street Journal last week, denying that protestors had suffered intimidation or repression at its hands.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has also been forced to defend his handling of Bersih, telling in an interview with CNN's John Deferios that police action had been "mild" and insisting to international reporters during his trip to London last week that allowing the Bersih march would have resulted in protracted chaos in the country.

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