

**No basis for an 'Arab Spring' in Malaysia, Najib tells BBC
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Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said there is no basis to mount a protest like the 'Arab Spring' in Malaysia, as the country has enjoyed 55 years of peace and stability.

"We don't think there's a basis for the people to go to the streets to protest against the government," he said when queried by the BBC yesterday whether he was fearful that the protest against the government on the scale seen in Egypt could happen in Malaysia.

Najib, who is on a four-day working visit to the United Kingdom, said what was important in the Malaysian context was that change could be delivered from within and it was not just about changing the government.

"It's what happens with that change. And if people want change, what I'm saying is that we can deliver change but from within," he said during the live interview with BBC news presenter Jon Sopel, which was monitored in Kuala Lumpur by Bernama.

Najib brushed aside claims that Malaysia was being governed in an autocratic manner and that the government was unresponsive to the people, suggestions drawn from Twitter feedback articulated by Sopel.

"We're not (autocratic). We have to reach out to them. The problem with social media is that there's an awful lot of disinformation out there and it's up to us to correct that.

"And this is what we're doing. We have to engage through the social media so that more and more people understand and appreciate what the government is doing," he explained.

Najib also fielded questions about the country's general election on May 5 which saw the Barisan Nasional (BN) being re-elected to power amid concerns over the conduct of the polls.

"We still maintain that the election was true, fair and transparent," he said, adding that the government was prepared to be scrutinised on this matter according to the constitution and law of the country.

"We have nothing to hide, we're transparent," he calmly told the interviewer.

Najib also took the opportunity to explain the measures taken by the government to do away with certain laws that had come under heavy criticism.

"We have removed the Internal Security Act, we have removed the... Emergency Ordinance in Malaysia. In other words, detention without trial is history in Malaysia. "So, for the first time in Malaysia there's an awful lot of latitude for people to even protest against the government," he said.

Elaborating, Najib said underpinning the Sedition Act was to ensure peace and harmony in Malaysia.

"We will amend the Sedition Act but, at the same time, there are certain provisions that will

ensure Malaysia will continue to be a country that's peaceful and harmonious," he said.

Stressing that Malaysia was governed by laws, Najib noted that those who said things that undermined the stability of the country would be held accountable.

He said certain laws had to be in place to ensure that multiracial Malaysia would continue to be a country where people could live in a peaceful and harmonious environment.

Alluding to the protests currently underway in Egypt, Najib said people could protest in Malaysia as long as it was done in a peaceful manner. "And we have actually introduced the Peaceful Assembly Act. In other words, even if you protest against the government, do it peacefully and you are allowed to do so," he said.

Going back to the May 5 election, Najib explained that it was fought on certain issues, with the opposition making certain promises.

"You know, if you're in the opposition, it's quite easy for you to promise a number of things, and the promises swayed quite a number of voters.

"But in truth, the agenda of the opposition was not costed, they were populist, they were even irresponsible but that swayed a number of voters," Najib said.

On his "Chinese tsunami" remark in the aftermath of the election, the prime minister said it was not an accusation but more of a statement over what had happened.

"But I did say in the same statement that we must work towards national reconciliation and we must reduce racial polarisation in Malaysia," he said. - July 3, 2013.

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