

Malaysia undergoing a 'slow-motion political crisis', says paper
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Despite presenting itself as one of the wealthiest and most stable countries in the region, Malaysia is in fact heading down a dangerous path as a series of political crises coupled with a growing oppression of rights and freedom continue to threaten the nation, says the Financial Times.

David Pilling, a columnist with FT, wrote yesterday that Malaysia's political system had become "inherently unstable" despite Umno's unbroken rule for nearly six decades.

"Malaysia is undergoing a slow-motion political crisis," he said.

In his column, Pilling highlighted several issues that trouble the country, including the debt-laden strategic development company, 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB).

1MDB has made headlines in both domestic and international media over allegations of corruption and mismanagement of public funds. The fund's advisory board is chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak who recently ordered the auditor general to investigate the state firm's accounts.

However, Pilling noted that 1MDB had changed auditors twice since 2009, adding that "the affair has cast a pall over the Najib government, which has presented itself as fiscally responsible and reform-minded".

The imprisonment of opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is another worrying signal, Pilling said, as his removal has created "a dangerous vacuum" in the country's political scene.

Anwar was in February sentenced to five years' jail for sodomy on charges which critics say were politically motivated. With Anwar in prison, Pilling said, the opposition was "in even worse trouble than the government", especially given DAP's fallout with PAS over the implementation of hudud in Kelantan.

Pilling also called attention to former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad who recently launched a series of attacks on Najib over issues such as 1MDB and the latter's leadership of Umno.

Dr Mahathir, who last weekend said Umno was now "about money", has become a face of a movement within the party to oust Najib, saying that Umno and the Barisan Nasional coalition will lose the next general election if the prime minister does not resign.

"The confluence of events has had a deeply destabilising effect," Pilling said, adding that there was already "growing intolerance" over religious matters. – April 16, 2015.

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