

Is Perak coup coming back to haunt Najib?

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In just one month, Najib Abdul Razak appear to have successfully neutralised all immediate threats to his position as prime minister.

Najib's position against possible ouster through Parliament or criminal charges - which his party said is part of a plot to criminalise the prime minister - appear secure.

He had successfully installed a new attorney-general who immediately disbanded the special task force probing the RM2.6 billion deposits into his personal bank accounts, suggesting that the prime minister is unlikely to face any charges.

Najib also appear to have mended ties with Dewan Rakyat speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia who was more than happy to formally suspend the Public Accounts Committee that was investigating 1MDB, and whose approval is needed for a no-confidence vote against the prime minister.

However, there is one other path to removing a prime minister which Najib is not quite safe from and it came from Najib's own play book - the Perak coup.

Najib, who in 2009 was Perak Umno liaison chief, had engineered the takeover of the Perak government from Pakatan Rakyat without going through the state assembly.

Having secured the defections of three Pakatan state assemblypersons, instead of a vote of no confidence in the state assembly, Najib had gone to then Sultan Azlan Shah to inform the monarch about BN's new majority.

The sultan then sacked Pakatan menteri besar Mohammad Nizar Jamaluddin and BN's new Menteri Besar Zambry Abdul Kadir was allowed to sworn in.

'Back-door majority'

In 2010, the Federal Court upheld that Zambry was the legitimate menteri besar despite the transition not going through the state assembly.

The judgment ultimately created an alternative to the legislative body in determining whether a head government had majority support and this may now be used on Najib himself.

Already, Najib's lieutenants have raised alarm bells about this possibility.

Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi today revealed there was an effort to get MPs in BN and the opposition to sign a statutory declaration to support a new replacement for

Najib.

He described this as an attempt to "topple the government through the backdoor" and claimed that it was being spearheaded by a leader within Najib's own party.

"I obtained this information from very trusted sources. The strange thing is, this effort is being spearheaded by one Umno-BN leader.

"As the deputy prime minister, as the vice president of Umno, I will not allow this to happen," said Zahid, who is also home minister.

His warning came amid confirmation that former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad had met his former arch-rival Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah (photo) on Tuesday about the formation of a new unity government.

If the Perak coup method is adopted against Najib, the anti-Najib forces will need only a simple majority of MPs in the 222-member Parliament to sign a statutory declaration declaring their support for a new prime minister.

This will then be presented to the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong, who if he goes by the Perak coup precedent, can immediately replace Najib as prime minister in favour of the new candidate.

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