

## **Old rivals Dr M and Ku Li set to hold joint-presser**

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Once bitter rivals whose fighting led to a split in Umno, former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah are set to share the same platform amid political and economic instability in the nation.

The pair is expected to hold a joint press conference at 4pm, which is also expected to touch on the Covid 19 pandemic and corruption.

The planned public appearance comes more than a month after Mahathir met with Tengku Razaleigh on possible political cooperation.

Amid a tussle between Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin and opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim for control of Putrajaya, Tengku Razaleigh has played a curious role.

Hours after Anwar met with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on Oct 13 to convince him that he commands majority support in the Dewan Rakyat, Tengku Razaleigh

was also summoned to the national palace to meet with the ruler.

Anwar has yet to succeed in his manoeuvring but Tengku Razaleigh too has been organising parallel efforts to dislodge Muhyiddin.

In September, Tengku Razaleigh wrote to the Dewan Rakyat calling for a confidence test on Muhyiddin and subsequently boycotted the budget vote after speaker Azhar Azizan Harun refused to accede to the request.

Tengku Razaleigh, better known as Ku Li, said he would not participate in the budget debate as long as the legitimacy of the government is not proven.

In the past, he had been touted as an alternative prime ministerial candidate. However, there is no indication this time around that he is actively rallying the support of MPs.

The budget vote, which is also a proxy confidence vote, is set to conclude this week.

It would be Anwar's last chance to prove that Muhyiddin has lost majority support in the Dewan Rakyat by mustering enough MPs to defeat the budget.

The Port Dickson lawmaker has been trying to convince Umno MPs to back him but Umno itself is split into multiple factions.

Umno MPs such as Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Najib Abdul Razak have hinted at a willingness to work with Anwar, making them among the parliamentarians to watch for possible defection.

However, Umno-linked bloggers such as Raja Petra Kamaruddin speculated that the Umno MPs might use Anwar to dislodge Muhyiddin without supporting him to take over as the premier.

Whether Anwar gets his way or otherwise through the Dewan Rakyat would be determined this week.

After the sitting concludes, any determination of a majority would be done behind the palace walls.

In the meantime, various political factions in both the government and opposition are preparing for any eventuality.

Mahathir and Tengku Razaleigh's planned joint-press conference had rekindled memories of a similar encounter in 2016 when Mahathir and Anwar had a

historic handshake after decades of bitter feud.

Their cooperation contributed to Pakatan Harapan's victory in the 2018 general election.

However, Anwar and Mahathir had another falling out this year following the collapse of the Harapan government.

The animosity is proving to be a stumbling block to a united opposition and might force a political reconfiguration.

Mahathir is finding himself in a similar position with Tengku Razaleigh when they first clashed in 1988.

The falling out and subsequent split eventually saw Tengku Razaleigh forming Semangat 46, a splinter Umno party that later re-merged with Umno in 1996.

However, Mahathir has formed not one but two splinter parties in just four years.

The nonagenarian split from Umno to form Bersatu in 2016 and together with its Harapan partners, won the 2018 general election.

He was ousted from Bersatu this year after he objected to Muhyiddin's move to take Bersatu out of Harapan and is now in the midst of setting up another splinter party - Pejuang.

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