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# Is Dr M's plan going anywhere?

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**IRONIC MOVE:** So-called 'revolt' has boosted PM's hand and rallied Umno troops

**I**S it a citizens' revolt or just a "very strange group of people" of various political stripes getting together without a real purpose?

One foreign commentator of Malaysian politics thinks that what could emerge down the road after the March 4 event is still hazy, perhaps even to the nonagenarian Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"It is ironic that the man who had crushed the opposition while in power has remade himself in retirement as the de facto leader of what in essence is a citizens' revolt," said Yang Razali Kasim.

The senior fellow with the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University noted that the so-called citizens' declaration was to "ensure the independence, credibility, professionalism and integrity of our national in-

stitutions", which, ironically, had been undermined by Dr Mahathir himself while in power.

But, he warned that any misplaced sense of confidence on the part of Umno could backfire.

"It would be foolhardy to take lightly what the 90-year-old warhorse is now doing, which may well lead to big changes in Malaysian politics," he said.

But as days passed after the March 4 declaration by Dr Mahathir and his newfound allies, such as DAP leader Lim Kit Siang, observers saw the former premier's latest antics as going nowhere.

The Malay heartland loathes the Dr Mahathir-DAP "tie-up", given the deep Malay resentment towards the largely Chinese-based party.

The Pas leadership has largely stayed out of the "unholy alliance", while there have been signs of dissent within DAP over its move to court Dr Mahathir.

DAP's Klang member of parliament, Charles Santiago, called the declara-

tion a "rushed document" and said it did not clearly spell out the aspirations of the people.

He said Dr Mahathir was the man who had single-handedly "ruined Malaysia's economy and tarnished the nation through autocratic means".

He said Dr Mahathir was the "root cause of the rot" affecting every Malaysian today.

"One cannot deny that his 22 years in power was made possible by the use of draconian laws to jail dissidents and critics," he said.

Santiago even likened the current situation to a popular American television series, *House of Cards*, which revolves around a politician's elaborate plan to make himself the American president.

Kit Siang had no choice but to play down the anger within the DAP ranks.

"(Their unhappiness) is understandable. I'm not surprised."

What's clear is that Dr Mahathir's latest strategy has backfired on him. It has, in fact, strengthened Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's hand, demolished some of his critics and rallied the Umno troops.

One veteran politician told this writer a few days ago: "Najib is at his strongest point now. It is not easy to take the chair from the incumbent."

The removal of Dr Mahathir as Petronas adviser proves that Najib means business.



(From right) Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik and DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang at the March 4 event in Kuala Lumpur where the declaration was announced.