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Dr M now leads the opposition charge?

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THE world is still reeling from the aftermath of the United States' presidential election last week, with currencies fluctuating at the prospect of Donald Trump occupying the White House, his grasp on international politics and possession of nuclear codes.

Americans, especially the ones used to discussions on fundamental issues during a presidential race, are bewildered as to how the 511-day campaign was riddled with aggressive populism, name-calling and gutter politics.

Of course, what is taking place in the US now, where all dreams and things Americana are possibly being redefined, did not offer much of a difference in comparison with the Malaysian political scene.

As of now, despite the enrolment of prominent names within its ranks, the opposition pact remains organisationally cluttered and divided.

The twist nevertheless, is that now, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is stepping up to the plate to take the reins at the alliance.

On Saturday, Dr Mahathir was given the stage to speak at Pakatan Harapan's first convention, where he continued his long-standing tirade against the Barisan Nasional government with the staple allegations of corruption and fiscal mismanagement.

He went up a notch by brazenly accusing Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak of "robbing" the country of its coffers through Malaysia Development Bhd (IMDB) and described him as a "truly dangerous man" for the country.

At the same time, Dr Mahathir lambasted Pas by suggesting that the Islamic party was fed with *dedak* (a euphemism for bribe) over its apparent cooperation with Umno and non-aggressive approach against BN.

There was nothing short of fireworks when Dr Mahathir decided to implore the convention to place his fledgling Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) on the centre stage, both literally and figuratively. Even DAP seemed to be muted by his presence.

Political scientist Associate Professor Dr Muhammad Fuad Othman noted that, in essence, Dr Mahathir had effectively presented himself as the de facto leader of the opposition fold by asserting his opinions on how the pact should run, including the need to register the coalition formally under a single banner.

As opposition leaders nodded in agreement with Dr Mahathir's suggestion, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's



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grip on the tripartite pact appeared to be waning as well.

"With Anwar out of the picture, some say that only Dr Mahathir has the influence and capacity to unify the opposition pact.

"And Dr Mahathir knows he has what it takes to get the opposition under his thumb.

"He knows that the opposition needs to go for a one-to-one match against BN. Anything less than that would severely dash his hopes and dreams.

"As far as Pas is concerned, they will think twice to rejoin the opposition pact if DAP and Parti Amanah Negara are around," said Fuad.

Earlier on Tuesday, Dr Mahathir walked into Parliament's compound to chair a press conference, in which he was flanked by top opposition leaders — PKR president Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang.

Dr Mahathir was there in a show of support for three former cabinet ministers, who are facing police investigations for allegedly leaking official secrets by speaking about IMDB in Parliament recently.

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"However, I must say this. I had always admired Dr Mahathir for his contributions to the country. But his actions of late are confusing.

"Is Dr Mahathir willing to kowtow to Anwar, Lim and Wan Azizah for a grander political scheme? What is he up to? Why is he contradicting himself?" said political observer Associate Professor Dr Mohd Adnan Hashim.

Pas vice-president Idris Ahmad had aptly described Dr Mahathir as someone who remained attached to his past grandeur.

"Well, he was in power for more than two decades. I guess it is difficult to let go," Idris told the *New Straits Times* not too long ago.

Pas's nonchalant view of Dr Mahathir revealed that it is resistant to the latter's clout.

Invariably, the proposed grand opposition coalition might not have the ulama on its side this time around — an irksome but substantial challenge to the old guard's political mettle.

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