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# Dr M's Bersih hijack shocking, unforgivable



IF Saturday's Bersih demonstration here is any indication, it shows the involvement of opposition politicians of every hue and colour.

PKR, DAP and PAN leaders were as usual heavily involved, but the direct involvement of former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad comes as very shocking to the ordinary people.

They were asking the same questions, the morning after, in the coffee shops and restaurants: What is Dr Mahathir up to? Why is he leading the opposition? Is he trying to rebrand himself at his age?

The events on Saturday show that Dr Mahathir, 92, has effectively hijacked Bersih, a people's movement that had been actively demanding for a clean and fair election.

While Bersih had always been used by opposition politicians to mobilise people before a general

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election, the involvement of Dr Mahathir was an open and blatant disregard for Bersih's independence and impartiality.

With Dr Mahathir's involvement, Bersih has discarded all semblance of impartiality and political neutrality.

It is now an opposition movement from beginning to end.

It can no longer claim to be a non-governmental organisation or a civil society movement. Not after Dr Mahathir and his opposition allies — DAP veteran leader Lim Kit Siang, PKR president Datuk Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, her daughter, party vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar, and PAN president Mohamad Sabu — were all hand in glove on an impromptu stage outside KLCC.

Dr Mahathir, who took over the Bersih rally at its height on Saturday, brought his exclusive political aim to the people's movement and made Bersih his own, much to the opposition of many Chinese, who had actively supported Bersih last year but stayed away on Saturday.

They made a beeline for the two-day demonstration last August, so much so that it was called the Chinese Bersih, but this year, many of



**Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad**

them stayed away.

Dr Mahathir has effectively undone a true people's movement that started as a protest movement in 2007 and saw participation from Pas to Hindraf to DAP, PKR and even some sections of BN like MIC, MCA and Umno. It so happened that, at that time, the movement was hijacked by former Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

A decade later, Dr Mahathir hijacked Bersih and infused his political aim into it — to topple Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Dr Mahathir had to make up for the failed putsch last June that had

ensnared his son, Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir, and Muhyiddin, both of whom were sacked from Umno and face a bleak future.

Another traveller of convenience, former rural and regional development minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal, who also lost his job in the failed putsch, has wisely disengaged himself from Mahathir's game plan. He was not even present at Bersih 5.

Bersih had achieved some things, such as the introduction of the indelible ink, but had failed in other things, like making the Election Commission more accountable. But it was always understood that significant changes must come slowly and that Bersih activities were a work in progress. Nobody expected Bersih to achieve its aims in a short span of time.

But, allowing Dr Mahathir to hijack a people's movement is simply unthinkable and unforgivable, and that is exactly what Bersih had achieved on Saturday.

The blame must squarely go to Bersih's past and current leaders — they had allowed a people's movement to be completely hijacked by politicians.