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'M' STANDS FOR MALAISE

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Dr Mahathir's foray into opposition's camp has sparked backlash against his allies



**SYED UMAR
ARIFF**

AMID heckling and jeers directed at him during the PKR Konvensyen Reformis Malaysia gathering on Saturday, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad walked into the hall of IDCC in Shah Alam wearing an awkward smile.

Dr Mahathir's visit was not totally unexpected, as with his foray into

the opposition camp.

Familiar derogatory labels shouted at him, including "Mahafiraun" or the "great pharaoh", did not stop him from taking centre stage.

So much so that his presence eclipsed the glow of opposition chieftains seated at the front row alongside PKR president Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, who, unfortunately, is no longer touted as the opposition leader.

Suffice to say, the former prime minister, who is now chairman of Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM), has managed to prop him-

self up as a novelty among anti-establishment supporters.

Dr Mahathir is aware that his presence in the fold is not accepted by many. But as long as his voice remains influential, he believes that even the staunchest of will can be bent by politics, as exemplified by the warm embrace from DAP's Lim Kit Siang and Lim Guan Eng.

The IDCC affair, according to observers, revealed more than just a supposed bravado of an old man seeking for a truce with his former enemies; by consistently asserting his presence, Dr Mahathir has been successful at positioning himself at

the opposition's helm.

To a certain extent, political maverick Datuk Zaid Ibrahim's opinion on Dr Mahathir as the opposition's de facto leader, no matter how controversial it may be, is not far off from the mind of the electorate.

"That is true. I think Dr Mahathir has garnered respect from many as he was prime minister for 22 years.

"Of course, Dr Mahathir has certain traits, which he thinks he can give orders to anybody... 'you do this and do that...'

that sort of thing," Pas election director Datuk Mustafa Ali said in response to Zaid's comments.

Nevertheless, Dr Mahathir's involvement with the opposition has brought a variable that is not too favourable to his new allies.

PKR is now suffering from issues centred on its principles, DAP leadership is being questioned of its integrity, and Parti Amanah Negara president Mohamad Sabu's creativity at coming out with new labels against Dr Mahathir, has been effectively nullified.



**Tun Dr Mahathir
Mohamad**

The stronger the crusade against Dr Mahathir back then when he was in power, the stronger was the backlash.

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