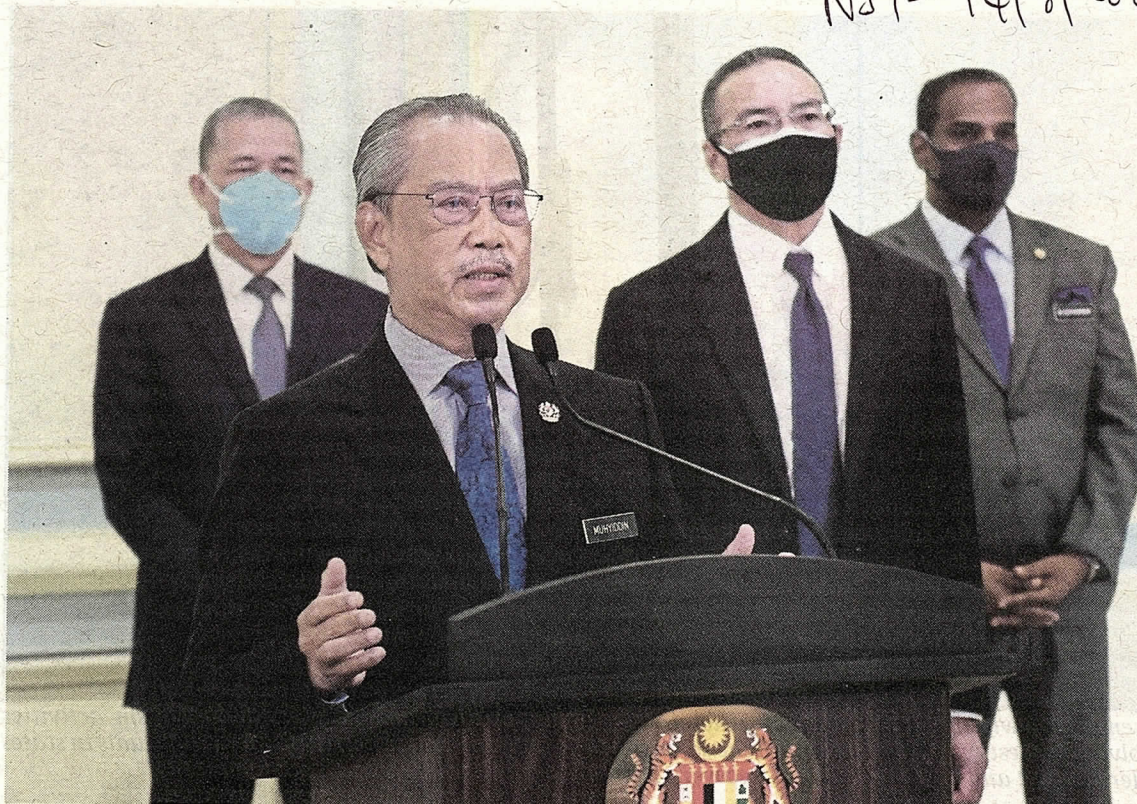


PM SEEKS BIPARTISAN SUPPORT

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He lays out proposal with 7 offers ahead of vote of confidence expected in Dewan Rakyat next month

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Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin speaking during a special address at Perdana Putra in Putrajaya yesterday. With him is Senior Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein (second from right). BERNAMA PIC

PRIME Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin has made a call to rally bipartisan support ahead of a confidence motion expected to be tabled in the Dewan Rakyat next month.

He said based on discussions with cabinet members and political leaders in Perikatan Nasional, a unanimous decision was made to negotiate with party leaders outside of PN to pass a vote of confidence for the prime minister at the Dewan Rakyat.

"This will allow the current government to continue to function in managing the pandemic until the appropriate time comes for a general election when we return the mandate to the people.

"The vote of confidence can only be passed with bipartisan support at the Dewan Rakyat," he said in a live telecast yesterday.

He said a more stable and inclusive government would be formed after the passing of the vote of confidence.

"It will be stable through bipartisan support at the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara and inclusive in its recognition of opposition parties to play a check-and-balance role that is more thorough and effective.

"Political stability is very important in our battle against Covid-19 and for the recovery of the country," he said.

Muhyiddin proposed a seven-point cross-party framework for bipartisan cooperation that will be implemented by the government following the passing of the vote of confidence.

He said the first point was that from now on members of parliament from all parties would get equal allocations so that more assistance could be given to the people.

"For opposition MPs, the allocation for this year will be rolled out on a pro rata basis."

He said the second point was in accordance with the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach involving the finance minister, who held engagement sessions with various groups, in-

cluding opposition parties, to get input and suggestions to improve the National Recovery Plan.

"Based on the suggestions, the government will present a proposal in Parliament to raise the ceiling for the Covid-19 Fund from RM65 billion to RM110 billion.

"To tackle the Covid-19 health crisis, additional allocations will be provided to improve and expedite testing, tracing and isolation of close contacts and positive cases.

"The government will also bolster the healthcare system by increasing the number of healthcare workers and enhancing the capacity of Intensive Care Units by sending patients from public hospitals to private hospitals, in accordance with the whole-of-nation approach."

Muhyiddin said the government would disburse RM10 billion to 11 million recipients in the second half of this year.

"The cash aid will continue in 2022, not only for the B40 income group, but also in the form of targeted assistance for the hardcore poor, urban poor and those from the M40 income group who have lost their jobs."

Thirdly, if the government secured two-thirds majority support in Parliament, Muhyiddin said a new bill would be proposed to set a two-term limit for the prime minister post, as well as a bill on anti-party hopping laws.

The fourth point, he said, was

on bolstering parliamentary reform by ensuring that Special Select Committees had more balanced representation of government and opposition MPs.

"The number of Special Select Committees can be increased so that all MPs can play a more effective check-and-balance role through their participation."

As an acknowledgement of the importance of their check-and-balance role, he said, 50 per cent of Special Select Committees would consist of government MPs, while

the other half would consist of opposition MPs.

On the fifth point, Muhyiddin said the government had agreed to lower the minimum voting age to 18 without waiting for the automatic voter registration process if he secured bipartisan support.

Sixth, he said the government would only table a Supply Bill in Parliament after garnering majority support from MPs.

The seventh point involved retirement benefits and privileges for opposition leader, similar to

those of a senior minister, in recognition of the opposition's role in the Dewan Rakyat, which has almost equal number of representatives as the government.

Muhyiddin said he would officially invite all political party leaders to discuss the proposals next week.

If the proposals for the bipartisan cooperation were agreed on, Muhyiddin said he would call for a special Dewan Rakyat sitting to table the vote of confidence and determine his legitimacy as the prime minister.

He pledged that the 15th General Election would be held by the end of July next year.

"The reason I made this proposal is to enable the government to continue to function amid the pandemic with bipartisan support in Parliament.

"At the same time, I am like you, in that I have the responsibility to ensure kleptocrats are nowhere near the administration of the country. And this is why we need to resolve this political issue."

He said he welcomed all political party leaders to deliberate on his proposals next week.

"I will issue an official invite to all party leaders to attend the discussion.

"If the proposal for bipartisan support is agreeable, I will call for a Dewan Rakyat special meeting to table a vote of confidence for the prime minister soon.

"I assure you that I will take the honourable and constitutional action in resolving the current political crisis. My only priority is to make sure the government continues to function well to deal with the pandemic and rehabilitate the country."



Grocery store owner Aziz Abd Rasheed, 24, watching the prime minister's special address on his smartphone at his store in Pangsapuri Taman Suria Pendaras in Port Klang, Selangor, yesterday. PIC BY FAIZ ANUAR