

# Earth-shattering day for the PM

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## Will Muhyiddin fight back or will he accept the claim that he has lost the majority?

Analysis by JOCELINE TAN

A POLITICAL earthquake – that is the only way to describe what happened yesterday.

It looks like the end has finally come for Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin after 11 Umno MPs pulled out support for his government.

The pullout threat was something that Umno had been holding like a knife to Muhyiddin's throat for more than a year.

Yet, it sent shockwaves all over when it finally happened.

The question on everyone's lips is, of course, whether Muhyiddin will fight back or if he will accept the claim that he has lost the majority.

The other question is whether his government will also disintegrate or if it will hold together and rally behind the new prime minister.

To add to the drama, Lenggong MP Datuk Seri Shamsul Anuar Nasarah had earlier in the afternoon resigned his Cabinet post, citing loyalty to his party.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi understood the significance of the moment.

He had all the MPs who supported the pullout stand by him at the press conference when announcing the decision.

Among those present were party adviser Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and former premier Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Muhyiddin has never once revealed the number of MPs he has, but it is understood that on a good day, he would easily have 114 MPs on the government bench.

However, the pullout means he is now dangling on with only 103 MPs.

"In my opinion, the PM has fallen



**Homeward bound:** The vehicle carrying Muhyiddin arriving at his residence in Bukit Damansara, Kuala Lumpur. – Bernama

because this, all along, has been an MPs game. But it is premature to talk about who will take over. We leave it to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to decide," said supreme council member Datuk Seri Johari Ghani.

The Palace, according to Ahmad Zahid, has been informed about Umno's decision.

Muhyiddin can either take it upon himself to resign or wait for the King to call him to show whether he still has the support needed to stay on.

"He is still the sitting PM. It is up

to him to show whether he still commands the majority," said Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan.

Muhyiddin can test his support in a vote in Parliament or he could also decide to dissolve Parliament, although that will require the consent of His Majesty.

In the event that he decides to call it a day, the King will have to go through the process of appointing a new prime minister from the party or coalition with the most numbers.

"I hope Malaysians will let

TuanKu do his work without trouble. Give him the space to make a good decision," said Mohamad, who is also Rantau assemblyman.

The Umno supreme council which made this big decision had apparently gone on smoothly.

There were no outright objections to the pullout, although several members were concerned about the implications at this critical juncture of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A number of them also wanted to know what would happen next if the Prime Minister stepped down

and the government collapsed.

"No one opposed the move to withdraw support. You have to understand that Umno will always stand by the Palace," said a supreme council member.

The supreme council member also said there was no discussion about who would take over from Muhyiddin.

Politics is such a treacherous sport because some of the 11 MPs who signed on for the pullout had, on Sunday night, signed support for Muhyiddin.

Umno would not have made such a bold move if the party leaders were not sure about where the Palace stood with Muhyiddin.

There are suggestions that Umno realised that relations between the Palace and the Prime Minister had reached a point of no return.

"Trust between the sovereign and the PM is crucial for a government to run smoothly," said Johari.

The concern among many people, especially the business community, is who will take over.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob would surely be in the running if the current government does not fall apart.

For that to happen, he will need to persuade the Bersatu MPs to stay put and not leave in a huff.

Tengku Razaleigh would also be a contender despite his age.

And of course, there is Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who has claimed that he has 107 MPs, which is more than what Muhyiddin currently commands.

There are bound to be more aftershocks following yesterday's political earthquake.

**The views expressed here are the writer's own.**