

Anwar faces stiff challenges after trust vote

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PETALING JAYA: What comes after securing majority support in the Dewan Rakyat is the bigger challenge for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, analysts say.

Council of Professors member Prof Dr Nik Ahmad Nik Mahmud said that although tabling a confidence motion carried some risks, the recent development in Sabah was a boost for Anwar in securing the support in Parliament.

"Over the past few days, the Sabah coalition seemed to have turned its back on Perikatan Nasional to support the new government.

"This will boost the confidence of Anwar when tabling the motion of confidence," Prof Nik Ahmad said when contacted yesterday.

He said the bigger question was whether the Prime Minister would be able to keep the support of MPs,

particularly the 30 Barisan Nasional MPs.

"Any wrong move, especially when dealing with Barisan and the parties from Sabah and Sarawak, will be a recipe for disaster for the coalition government," he noted.

Prof Nik Ahmad said there was always a danger that any of these coalition members might make a U-turn.

"So keeping the coalition intact is a huge and challenging task for the Prime Minister.

"He (Anwar) may have to keep looking over his shoulder from time to time to make sure the coalition remains intact and support him," he added.

The vote of confidence for Anwar's leadership will be one of the main agendas when Dewan Rakyat meets for the first time on Dec 19 following the 15th General Election last month.

On Nov 24, Anwar pledged to table a motion of confidence in

Parliament shortly after being sworn in as Malaysia's 10th Prime Minister.

He said it would prove his two-thirds majority support in the House, although not required to do so under the law.

The motion of confidence is listed as item eight in the Dewan Rakyat's meeting order for the two-day meeting.

Anwar previously claimed he had more than two-thirds majority support from MPs.

Ilham Centre executive director Hisomuddin Bakar said there should not be a problem for Anwar in getting the majority support, as a repeat of the Sheraton Move was highly unlikely at this juncture.

"However, in politics, anything is possible.

"Any weakness in his administration will give room to dissatisfied parties to work towards a change of government," he said.

Hisomuddin said the government

led by Anwar must be able to meet the rakyat's expectations if it was to survive the full five-year term.

Universiti Sains Malaysia's political expert Prof Dr Sivamurugan Pandian said although there were some cracks in Barisan initially, Anwar should be able to secure a comfortable majority support on Dec 19.

"The confidence vote will also be a test for Anwar to see whether Barisan remains intact as a bloc in the Dewan Rakyat," he said.

He said securing the confidence vote was merely the first hurdle for Anwar, who must then ensure the political blocs within his government remain stable throughout his administration.

He cited the coming state elections involving Penang, Selangor, Kedah, Terengganu and Kelantan as further tests for Anwar.

"He (Anwar) must make sure he can stabilise the coalition and focus on the elections.

"His administration can last if he maintains the coalition and if the other political blocs remain stable.

"Anwar waited 24 years to become prime minister, so he will want to ensure that his leadership will last for at least five years," said Prof Sivamurugan.

Azmi Hassan, a senior fellow at Nusantara Academy for Strategic Research, said holding the confidence vote was a good move by Anwar to silence Perikatan which has challenged his support.

"It is safe for Anwar to get more than the required 112 simple majority support.

"However, getting beyond the 148 two-thirds majority is a different question," he said.

In his view, there may be a risk of certain Barisan MPs being absent when voting is held.

He added that Anwar's administration would remain intact as long as Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi remained as Umno president.