



It's just politics

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IF you thought 2023 was the ultimate when it came to cloak-and-dagger politics, think again. Next year - beginning tomorrow - is likely to be even more dangerous.

It will be Malaysia's *Year of Living Dangerously*, to borrow the title of the 1982 movie.

Starring Mel Gibson, Sigourney Weaver and an Oscar-winning Linda Hunt, the movie is based on the 1978 Christopher Koch novel and is a semi-fictionalised story of events in Indonesia leading to a coup intended to topple president Sukarno on Sept 30, 1965. There are plenty of twists and turns and shadowy figures in this tale, something we will undoubtedly see in Malaysian politics next year.

Though we should keep in mind that on Jan 31, we'll have a new Yang di-Pertuan Agong beginning his five-year term.

The headline of an article in Singapore's *Straits Times* early this month sets the tone: "No 'puppet king': Sultan of Johor set to voice his views as Malaysia's next monarch". Sultan Ibrahim Almarhum Sultan Iskandar also revealed that he will be making his presence felt with the government as well as "others".

"When I say I don't want to see you, that's already a big question why. And I have my own social media team. What I tell the PM, I



Warning: Dangerous political waters ahead

From a PM who's resolute about fighting on, to a veteran pol who might have been stirred into action by recent strikes against him, 2024 is set to be a turbulent year for politics in the country.

make sure it goes out, the whole country will know. Either he works with me closely or things will get difficult," he said.

So Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim must balance what he wants to do as Prime Minister with working closely with the King "or things will get difficult".

Anwar must also be careful of one of Malaysia's most potent behind-the-scenes politicians: former Finance minister Tun

Daim Zainuddin.

Technically, Anwar declared war on the veteran politician when the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission last week seized the 60-storey Ilham Tower in Kuala Lumpur that is owned by Daim's family.

Those in the media who covered events leading to the downfall and arrest of Anwar when he was a heartbeat away from becoming prime minister in the

late 1990s know that Daim is capable of deep plots thanks to his business and political tentacles spread throughout the country. Arguably, some say it was Daim's men who brought down Anwar when he was deputy prime minister and Umno deputy president in 1998 with those abuse of power and sodomy allegations.

This year is ending with another one of those endless rumours about moves to bring down Anwar's government.

The latest is a recycled version of a story I heard around the middle of this year. It is about Opposition coalition Perikatan Nasional offering Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) the prime minister's post if the Sarawak-based coalition with 23 MPs will support it.

Despite the current seemingly relative stability of the unity government, based on the mathematics of politics it is still possible to topple Anwar's administration: Perikatan has 72 MPs (including the five rebels who declared support for the Prime Minister) + GRS with 23 + about 12 Umno rebel MPs + Gagasan Rakyat Sabah with six MPs + Parti Warisan's three MPs + Muda president Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman + a Parti KDM MP and two independent

Connecting: Anwar signing a Malaysia Day book at an event in Sarawak, witnessed by Abang Johari (left) and Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor. The PM is engaging much more than previous PMs with Sabah and Sarawak as the two states are key to the stability of the Federal Government. - ZULAZHAR SHEBLEE/The Star

MPs = more than half of the 222 MPs in the Dewan Rakyat.

Sarawak and Sabah are essential to the survival of Anwar's government. Periodically, the Prime Minister has to come out with statements that prompt headlines such as "Don't count on Sarawak, Sabah to topple govt", in response to a speech he gave on Dec 23.

PMX (as Malaysia's 10th PM is increasingly becoming known) assured the public that any party that was plotting to topple his government could no longer rely on GPS and GRS to support them. He revealed that he had learned from Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg that there were "desperate attempts" by other parties to persuade him and GPS to ditch the Federal Government.

"[Abang Johari] in a firm and consistent manner rejected [these proposals] and said that he would not entertain any discussion on severing relations between Sarawak and the unity government," he said.

"GPS's stances are critical in today's political scenario because a change [of government] can only be done with the backing of GPS and GRS."

The Prime Minister added: "Even if there is an attempt to form a backdoor [government], it can only be done if the opportunity is given by both states."

There will be more talk of plots to oust Anwar as Prime Minister next year, I'm sure.

The title of Koch's novel refers to the Italian phrase "*vivere pericoloso*", meaning "to live dangerously". Those in the media who have covered Anwar since the 1990s know that the lawan tetap lawan (keep fighting the fight) politician loves to live dangerously when it comes to politics.

Welcome to Malaysia's *Year of Living Dangerously*.