

A meeting much talked about

POLITICS has once again done the unexpected - reuniting two leaders from different camps to join forces based on common grounds.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad appeared smiling and in a jovial mood when he was greeted by Perikatan Nasional chairman Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin at his house late Tuesday night.

Muhyiddin, who was wearing a black long-sleeved batik shirt, also shook hands warmly with Dr Mahathir when they met.

The meeting between the two Malay leaders is believed to be the first since the Sheraton Move in February 2020 that led to the fall of Dr Mahathir's administration and saw Muhyiddin named as the leader of the new government the following month.

The meeting of the two former rivals has generated strong chatter among Malay political circles on the potential of the latest developments.

This is because both leaders still have a considerable amount of influence among the Malay community.

Hence, the combination of their clout is seen to be more of a political strategy to solidify their fight against the unity government.

It is clear this can be a win-win situation for both sides in terms of their "political marriage".

However, Datuk Seri Khairud-

Whether it's a political strategy or not, the possible Dr M-Muhyiddin cooperation will have some bearing on the state polls.



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Analysis

din Hassan, who was also present at the private meeting, insisted that it is not political.

The Malay Proclamation secretariat chairman said the two leaders only sat down together in a non-partisan manner to discuss the plight and the future of the Malays.

"It has nothing to do with politics and we are not involved in any political movements to topple the government. Our main focus is to address the predicament of the Malays and to protect their position," added Khairuddin.

Muhyiddin has also come out to say that the meeting is not totally focused on the "Malay Proclamation".

The cooperation of the duo, if successful, will definitely have

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Dr Oh Ei Sun

some bearing on the upcoming state polls.

This will not be their first-time working together as, along with other opposition leaders then, they managed to topple the Barisan Nasional-led government in the 14th General Election in 2018 under the Pakatan Harapan banner.

Such cooperation between the two former prime ministers will also reinforce the thinking that the Malays are no longer with the unity government in the upcoming state polls.

This perhaps can be an opening

gambit for the two to work even closer with each other.

Bersatu Youth chief Wan Ahmad Fayhsal Wan Ahmad Kamal, who is also Machang MP, said he is not surprised by the meeting.

"I think the meeting was a good gesture by both sides. Dr Mahathir was also one of the instrumental players behind the formation of Bersatu," he said.

"Having the two leaders patch up after about three years of bad blood is good for both sides.

"Both of them have their own staunch supporters and once they close ranks, they can work together to achieve greater goals."

Wan Ahmad Fayshal said Bersatu has always viewed Dr Mahathir as a respected statesman and cherished his contributions to the party and the country.

"So it is quite natural for Dr Mahathir to cooperate with a leader or party that he used to be in, which continues to be steadfast in championing the Malay and bumiputra agenda," he said.

Many critics believed that Dr Mahathir is only working to shore up the support of the Malays for his own political agenda.

He has been making controver-

sial statements, including claiming recently that it is unconstitutional to promote Malaysia as a multiracial country.

Political analyst Dr Oh Ei Sun, a senior fellow at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, said the meeting between the two former prime ministers is to form a united front against Dr Mahathir's current rival Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"Apparently, Dr Mahathir has a cascading list of political rivals, with Anwar currently heading the list. Once he is done with Anwar, he is likely to go after the next rival down the list, and so on.

"The Malay Proclamation and such are but props to justify his political manoeuvring," said Oh.

As his 98th birthday nears, Dr Mahathir once again shows that he remains an adroit politician, making friends out of enemies and enemies out of friends for as long as it suits his political interest.

It seems very likely that Dr Mahathir will be featured prominently in the opposition's campaign in the upcoming state polls.

However, whether such cooperation will really translate into votes is another matter.