

# EXPERTS: MUHYIDDIN'S U-TURN MIMICS DR M'S MOVE IN 2002

**They say Bersatu chief testing the waters to gauge support for him**

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**P**OLITICAL observers say Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's announcement that he would be relinquishing his Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu) presidency and subsequent withdrawal of the decision was an attempt to mimic Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's move in 2002.

Back then, Dr Mahathir, during the president's winding-up speech at the 56th Umno general assembly, made an unexpected announcement that he was resigning from the post of party president, prompting Umno supreme council members to rush to his side, begging him to change his mind.

One hour after the announcement, his then deputy, Tun (then Datuk Seri) Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, said Dr Mahathir had retracted his decision.

Political analyst Dr Mohammad Tawfik Yaakub, however, said Muhyiddin was caught up in his own words when he openly declared that the greatest power in determining political careers (in this context as Bersatu president) was not the general assembly, but his wife.

"Dr Mahathir had never openly involved his wife in determining his political future.

"I believe Muhyiddin was just testing the waters to see what his current support level was, even though he denies that it was a political gimmick.

"So it's somewhat amusing if you want to compare Muhyiddin's actions with those of Dr Mahathir's," he told the *New Straits Times*.

On Saturday, during the president's winding-up speech at the Bersatu annual general meeting, Muhyiddin announced that he would be contesting for another term as president of the party next year.

This came barely 24 hours after he announced during the president's policy speech that he



Umno supreme council members reacting after Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (centre) announced that he was resigning from the post of party president during the president's winding-up speech at the 56th Umno general assembly in 2002. FILE PIC



Dr Mohammad Tawfik Yaakub



Dr Ainul Adzellie Hasnul

press conference at the end of the general assembly, refuted allegations that his announcement about not defending his position in the party polls was a gimmick.

Tawfik, however, believed that it was indeed a gimmick, despite Muhyiddin's denial.

"If he was serious about stepping down, he should have announced a successor and firmly stood by the decision, even if he was heavily persuaded.

"I think Muhyiddin needs to be firm in making decisions. He should not be worried about 'sinking', when he is no longer the president.

"He can propose to be a de facto leader of Bersatu, such as an adviser or chairman."

He believed that Muhyiddin's actions were a political drama to appear relevant and to warm the atmosphere of Bersatu's annual general meeting.

Tawfik said Muhyiddin was "testing the waters to see if he had the support to do so.

This, he said, came after four Bersatu members of parliament declared their support for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and the unity government, along with an MP who openly said he was willing to support the prime minister if an allocation was given to his constituency.

"This clearly shows that Muhyiddin cannot control his own MPs and it is more worrying if the situation happens at the grassroots level.

"Therefore, he decided to test the waters at the Bersatu general assembly to gauge support for him."

The four Bersatu MPs are Zahari Kechik (Jeli), Mohd Azizi Abu Naim (Gua Musang), Datuk Suhaili Abdul Rahman (Labuan) and Datuk Iskandar Dzulkarnain Abdul Khalid (Kuala Kangsar).

On Nov 9, Bukit Gantang MP Datuk Syed Abu Hussin Hafiz Syed Abdul Fasal expressed his readiness to support Anwar if the allocation of RM30 million for his constituency was approved in the 2024 Budget.

Political analyst Dr Ainul Adzellie Hasnul agreed that Muhyiddin had imitated Dr Mahathir's 2002 move, when he wanted to vacate his post in Umno.

"He (Muhyiddin) wanted to see whether the delegates still wanted him in the party.

"Indeed, when he saw that the delegates protested his announcement, he 'decided' to still defend his position as the head of the party."

Ainul Adzellie said Muhyiddin should not have announced that he would not defend the position in the first place.

"I am not sure whether it was a gimmick but I believe that he is not ready to vacate his post.

"This, as Bersatu still has a chance to topple the government in the next general election.

"Only after the election should he decide whether to stay on as the party president, based on the election results."

would not defend his position.

Muhyiddin said his wife, Puan Sri Noorainee Abdul Rahman, told him that the party still needed him and that he should stay for another term.

The former prime minister, at a