



It's just politics

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"SO the Opposition and Umno rebels can't get enough support to bring down the Anwar government?" asked a foreigner involved in foreign direct investment while having coffee with me in Kuala Lumpur.

The hot topic in Malaysia is the Dubai Move. Allegedly, it is a plot by the Opposition to oust Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as Prime Minister.

Foreign investors and diplomats are trying to ascertain whether the country will have a new prime minister in 2024.

Note to politicians and the government: Political instability in Malaysia is making foreign investors jittery.

"They could if they were like the Avengers minus the *Civil War*," I replied.

In Marvel's 2016 movie, *Captain America: Civil War*, the Avengers are divided into two opposing factions led by Captain America and Iron Man respectively. What I was trying to tell the foreign investor is that those plotting to grab power are as powerful as the Avengers but at the moment, they are divided. As a fan of the movie franchise, he understood my analogy.

Previously, he had assumed

Who is trying to topple the Malaysian government?

Well, we're not sure. There are just too many Captain Americas jostling to lead a rout.

that those trying to oust Anwar were a single, united entity with the sole purpose of plotting the Prime Minister's downfall. I explained to him that, actually, there were several "superheroes" in Perikatan Nasional and Umno Team B (which is everyone but Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi).

However, the superheroes are not working in unison. Each one thinks he is cleverer than the others. Some have a rivalry with the others. And each has a different sphere of influence.

For example, politician A might have the support of Bersatu, but he can't get any support from Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS, with 23 MPs, is a significant bloc). GPS leaders have trust issues with him as he broke his promise that Bersatu would not contest in Sarawak in the 15th General Election in 2022. Some of his party members also think that he has been compromised by those who hold power.

Politician B can get GPS support as he has been deemed trustworthy when in power. However, he can't convince his party MPs to support him.

Politician C can get the support of all the necessary blocs (Perikatan, consisting of Bersatu and PAS; Umno rebels; GPS; Gagasan Rakyat Sabah or GRS; and the smaller parties) but not from one of the powers-that-be. If there is no buy-in from that powerful individual, a change of government cannot happen.

I repeated this story to a diplomat over text messages, and



In control: Anwar is still holding onto the seat of power as the Opposition remains disorganised in attempts to topple his administration. — FAIHAN GHANI/The Star

that person told me that he agreed that three factions were plotting to make PMX (the 10th Prime Minister) into XPM (ex-prime minister).

"But there's now a fourth prime minister candidate - Samsuri. PAS is quietly playing a behind-the-scenes role in this," he said.

The diplomat was talking about Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Samsuri Mokhtar, the Terengganu MB and PAS vice-president who won the Kemaman parliamentary by-election convincingly in December 2023.

Returning to my coffee talk with the foreign investor, he told me: "I heard that the King

had met with 124 MPs."

"Not true," I said. "MPs from GPS, GRS, etc, have not signed any SDs (statutory declarations)."

I was confident about my political intel as I'd contacted friends who are MPs, and they told me they'd not signed anything.

"Do you think that GPS and GRS will agree to a change of government?" he asked.

"If the government is about to fall, they will all want to join the winning side," I replied.

But at the moment, I told him, GPS is staying put with the Anwar government. Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg has hinted that 2024

will be a good year for his territory.

(I'm unsure how to describe Sarawak and Sabah nowadays. Are they still states now that they have been declared equal partners with Peninsular Malaysia? Or are they territories? Opinions, anyone?)

The deal for Sarawak that the premier is getting from the Prime Minister is good. GPS has no reason to be part of a new government unless it somehow offers a better deal.

"So if there is no real effort to bring down PMX, then why is there loud talk of the Dubai Move?" the foreign investor asked.

"There are moves - whether the Dubai Move or the Chow Kit Move (as Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor has joked) - to trigger a change of government. But they aren't likely to move," I said.

I then asked, "Have you noticed who makes the most noise about the Dubai Move?"

"The government," the investor replied immediately.

"Perhaps it wants to create a siege mentality so that the rakyat is more concerned about the fall of the government rather than the rise of the price of goods," I ventured.

To bring down this government, I think Perikatan and the Umno rebels need Captain America to give that iconic order, "Avengers, Assemble!"

But too many politicians are competing to be Captain America.