

## **HOW MAHATHIR GETS UNDER NAJIB'S SKIN**

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**By Super Admin**

**The old street fighter only gets better with age.**

*Scott Ng, Free Malaysia Today*

Mahathir's iconic appearance at the Bersih 4 rally has been discussed, dissected, and debated by the pundits of the Malaysian political sphere. One cannot deny the deep impact that has been left on the consciousness of the nation by the fact that someone as notoriously authoritarian as Mahathir has lent support to a people-power movement.

Mahathir was thoroughly opposed to street demonstrations during his time in office, and condemned the first Bersih march in 2007 in his typically biting fashion. As a leader considered by many to be dictatorial, he often used an iron fist against dissent, as Lim Kit Siang and the other victims of Ops Lalang can tell you. So what has made him change?

The answer is simple. Mahathir realises that any attempt to topple Prime Minister Najib Razak cannot be successful unless it is a united attempt by dissenters who cross party and ideological lines. Forces within the government have tried, forces outside the government have tried, and both have failed in the face of the vast power and resources available to the Prime Minister. Mahathir has even accused all Umno MPs and division chiefs of accepting bribes in return for supporting Najib.

If a no-confidence vote is to be passed, it will require support from both BN and the Opposition. Loyalists are unlikely to budge, but those bought off with money, as Mahathir alleges, may be swayed by an appeal to their instinct for self-preservation. This is likely the reasoning behind Mahathir's message, namely, that Umno will fall in the next GE if Najib stays in power. It is a threat to the MPs still sitting on the fence or happily playing with their money at home.

The grand old man of Malaysian politics has been playing this game for a long time and, like a seasoned street fighter, he knows how to call his spots. His appearance at Bersih was a carefully considered move, down to the element of surprise. Given the lack of a defining moment in the protest, Mahathir was most likely aware of the size of the platform available to him, and what better way to make everyone sit up and listen?

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