

Political meets that made an impact on the country's political landscape

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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 25 — The meeting that took place between 17 Umno MPs led by Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein and PKR deputy president Datuk Seri Azmin Ali set tongues wagging on what had transpired during the high-profile outing.

The November 18 meeting at Azmin's house has led to both PKR and Umno top leadership lambasting their respective members who were seen as disloyal as they had held a meeting without prior approval or notice.

Several Umno MPs have since clarified that they met Azmin to discuss projects within their respective constituencies and even rubbished claims they were supposedly talking about defecting to Pakatan Harapan.

Although the substance of what was discussed at the meet remains debatable within the political landscape, it is not the first such meeting among politicians across the political divide.

Here are among some meets or rendezvous of political opponents that have drawn public interest or even drastically changed the nation's political landscape.

PAS-Umno unity talks post-2008 General Elections to 2013

Following Barisan Nasional's win in the 12th General election in March, 2008, PAS leaders had met Umno MPs to discuss a supposed merger of the two parties on the basis to unify Malay support and even establish a unity government.

The “secret meetings” between lawmakers of the two parties had drawn the criticism of then DAP national chairman Karpal Singh who claimed PAS had acted in bad faith by attending those meetings.

However, PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang at the time said PAS had no intention of joining BN and revealed that it was Umno who had initiated the meetings.

The conversation between the two parties continued until a stern decision was made by Hadi not to engage in the talks following the 2013 general election.

This time, however, PAS alleged that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was in talks with their political rivals at the time to form a unity government.

A year after the PAS-Umno unity talk started, the Perak constitutional crisis in February 2009 happened after it was sparked when three Pakatan Rakyat (PR) assemblymen defected, causing the state government to collapse.

BN then formed the new state government after they secured 31 assemblymen who also stated that they had no confidence in embattled Perak Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Mohammad Nizar Jamaluddin.

The decision was challenged in court and doubts over its legitimacy were not removed until a year later, when the Federal Court upheld an earlier decision by the Court of Appeal that Barisan Nasional’s (BN) Datuk Zambry Abd Kadir was the rightful Mentri Besar.

Anwar Ibrahim’s failed September 16, 2008 takeover

Then Opposition leader Anwar had organised to convince 30 to 40 BN MPs to cross over in a bid to topple the government. — Picture by Choo Choy May

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Then Opposition leader Anwar had organised to convince 30 to 40 BN MPs to cross over in a bid to topple the government and urged then prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to step down.

Prior to September 16, Anwar had met with many BN MPs from Sabah and Sarawak who had allegedly told him that they were unhappy with how government federal lawmakers treated the states.

Despite assurances given by then Sabah chief minister Tan Sri Musa Aman that all of the state BN assemblymen and federal lawmakers were loyal to the ruling coalition, Anwar quipped that he could meet with the former to reveal how much support BN actually had.

However, the attempted takeover fell through when Anwar failed to receive enough support from BN lawmakers.

The birth of Pakatan Harapan

The exposure of the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal in 2015 led to monumental changes to the political landscape of the country.

At the onset of the scandal, many of Datuk Seri Najib Razak's members of Cabinet and administration had openly raised their concerns on 1MDB, which included Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who was the Deputy Prime Minister at the time and former Minister of Rural and Regional Development Tan Sri Shafie Apdal.

Both men were unceremoniously removed from their position in July 2015 along with the then attorney-general Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail, who was tasked to investigate the 1MDB scandal.

Prior to his removal from the Cabinet, Muhyiddin was seen in official functions with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad who had already voiced his unhappiness of the state of affairs and of Najib's alleged impropriety regarding 1MDB.

Muhyiddin had also admitted that he was in constant contact with Dr Mahathir to hear his concerns.

Dr Mahathir then quit Umno in February 2016 after he failed to receive support from the party to remove Najib. Muhyiddin and Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir were also sacked from Umno during the same time.

This led to Mahathir and Muhyiddin seeking allies from then Opposition members such as Lim Kit Siang and Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah to topple the Najib administration.

In September 2016, Dr Mahathir made history by meeting Anwar for the first time — 18 years after he was sacked in 1998.

The high-profile meet set the tone for Dr Mahathir's eventual support for Anwar to become the eighth prime minister.

On November of 2016, Dr Mahathir's wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Muhamad Ali also met with Dr Wan Azizah as means to reconcile the two families, while some pundits extrapolate that it was also to build bridges for Dr Mahathir's newly registered PPBM and PKR.

After much reconciliation, the Pakatan Harapan was borne out of compromise from Dr Mahathir and his former foes in the then Opposition.

Rafizi, Nurul Izzah and KJ rendezvous in Bangsar

Former Pandan MP Rafizi Ramli, Permatang Pauh MP Nurul Izzah Anwar and Rembau MP Khairy Jamaluddin were spotted having lunch together in a café in Bangsar on December 18, 2018.

The meet aroused the interest of Malaysian social media users and political pundits as it occurred a day after Nurul Izzah resigned as PKR vice president and as chairman of the Technical and Vocational Education Training Taskforce.

Her resignation came after criticisms of nepotism and favoritism in the reformist party.

Although the rendezvous was merely to chat among old friends as explained by Rafizi through a Twitter posting, many were wondering whether the three, who are seen as moderate Malay figures within their respective parties, were planning a new political movement.

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