

Muhyiddin faces more headache after 'removing' Dr Mahathir

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DR Mahathir Mohamad's removal from Bersatu only adds pressure on Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin to prove he has majority support, said analysts.

There is a strong possibility of the party being dragged to court as the former prime minister is likely to challenge the removal, Ilham Centre executive director Mohd Azlan Zainal told The Malaysian Insight.

After weeks of speculation, Bersatu said yesterday party founder and chairman Dr Mahathir, along with four other MPs, have had their memberships "revoked" for sitting on the opposition bench in Parliament on May 18.

It said the five were removed in accordance with articles 10.2.2 and 10.2.3 of the party constitution, which state that membership is terminated when a member announces he is quitting the party or joins another.

However, none of those issued termination letters has done either.

Besides Dr Mahathir, Bersatu also ended the memberships of deputy president Mukhriz Mahathir, youth chief Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman, supreme council member Maszlee Malik, as well as Amiruddin Hamzah.

Their unceremonious removal will only encourage Dr Mahathir to continue questioning Muhyiddin's support in Parliament and push for a no-confidence motion, said Azlan.

"Once he (Dr Mahathir) has enough support, he will seek an audience with the king to deny Muhyiddin has sufficient support in Parliament."

Since coming to power on March 1, Muhyiddin's support has not been tested in Parliament.

Despite Dr Mahathir filing a no-confidence motion against the prime minister, the matter did not see the light of day as Muhyiddin limited the one-day sitting to just the royal address.

Following the session, experts said Muhyiddin has a razor-thin majority of 114 – just two more than the required 112.

Dr Mahathir's next opportunity is the next Parliament session, set to begin on July 13.

Dr Mahathir Mohamad getting booted out of Bersatu paves the way for him to work with Pakatan Harapan, says a UTM don. – The Malaysian Insight file pic, May 29, 2020.

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Pressure from all sides

Universiti Malaya political analyst Prof Awang Azman Awang Pawi said Dr Mahathir's resolve will only strengthen after yesterday's episode.

“The real Dr Mahathir will come out after this.”

He said the removal was expected as Muhyiddin faced pressure both within and outside the party.

In Perikatan Nasional, he was pressured to appoint MPs to posts in government-linked companies, while in Bersatu, he had to face Dr Mahathir and the statesman's supporters, said Awang Azman.

Muhyiddin has also had to grapple with an Umno that is not keen to formalise the PN coalition. And, he has yet to find a way to placate MPs from the Barisan Nasional lynchpin facing corruption trials.

“I wouldn't be surprised if the next step is to hold Bersatu's elections as soon as possible to resolve the issue of support,” said Awang Azman.

After the removal exercise, Muhyiddin is expected to retain the Bersatu

presidency uncontested, as among those ejected from the party is Mukhriz, who had been eyeing the post.

The chairman's post, meanwhile, is pretty much a given for Muhyiddin to fill.

"Muhyiddin has managed to stop Mukhriz and Dr Mahathir, and take sole control of Bersatu," said Awang Azman.

However, he said, this is not the end, as the party is surely split now.

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia political science lecturer Mazlan Ali said Dr Mahathir's removal will give the Langkawi MP more momentum to challenge Muhyiddin's legitimacy as prime minister.

"Without the distractions, Dr Mahathir can focus solely on denying Muhyiddin. It also paves the way for him to officially work with Pakatan Harapan without the burden of Bersatu."

Mazlan does not believe that Dr Mahathir will establish a new party or join a PH component.

"His only goal now is to bring Muhyiddin down. He doesn't need another distraction." – May 29, 2020.

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