



## Asymmetric power in Malaysian politics: Muhyiddin's domination

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### Abstract

Muhyiddin's appointment as Malaysia's prime minister in February 2020 came as a surprise to many. What is even more surprising is that he was able to defend his position despite having a dubious majority. His ability to dominate politics is something that needs to be explored. This article unfolds the factors of this domination and provides a theoretical explanation. It argues that the asymmetrical power stipulated by the constitution resulted in the domination of the prime minister in Malaysia, thus creating an imbalance of power for the prime minister to be the dominant political actor. Although Muhyiddin was seen as a weak political player, his position as prime minister has allowed him to dominate the political process and centralise his powers from the nature of asymmetrical power. This article is qualitative in nature and uses interview as the main data collection method. This paper concludes that the prime minister will forever be the dominant actor if centralisation becomes the fundamental governing element.

**Keywords:** Asymmetric power, Malaysian politics, Muhyiddin, prime minister domination, structured imbalance.

### Introduction

The prime minister's power often becomes the subject of discussion in Malaysian politics, which focuses on the prime minister's behaviour in controlling politics without giving a theoretical explanation for such behaviour. The usual conclusion is that the prime minister behaves autocratically and subsequently creates an authoritarian regime in Malaysia (Dettman, 2020). This conclusion is a half-baked political analysis since it is not rooted in the theoretical explanation underpinning Malaysian politics. This article states that the institutional design in Malaysia's political system has created asymmetrical power, which eventually resulted in the prime minister's domination. The basis of this argument is rooted in the asymmetrical power

model that emphasises executive domination in the political system. Despite the change of prime minister, the dominance prevails as the imbalance of power gives them an inherent advantage.

The dominance of the prime minister in Malaysia occurs in almost every administration; nonetheless, there is no constructive explanation for this occurrence apart from describing the prime minister as an autocratic political player. It is interesting to note that although prime ministers have not exhibited an autocratic nature, they have still been able to defend their position. The latest prime minister, Muhyiddin, for example, managed to retain his position despite having a disputable majority. Soon after he took office, Muhyiddin's power was seen to grow despite challenges from the opposition. Various actions taken by the opposition to overthrow him all failed. This raises an important question – what makes the prime minister so powerful? To unravel this question, this article proposes an asymmetrical power model as the organising perspective and rejects the notion of an autocratic prime minister. It argues that the position has made the prime minister dominant due to the asymmetrical power embedded in the political system.

### **The asymmetric power model: explaining the prime minister's power**

The asymmetric power model is one of the organising perspectives for studying political systems. It explains the nature of the power imbalance that exists in the political system and the dominance of the prime minister in the political process. One of the main features of the model is structured inequality. Through this inequality, access to power is limited and controlled by certain groups in the country, especially those well connected. This article demonstrates how inequalities gives inherent advantages to the prime minister at the expense of others. The central paradox in structured inequality is whether the power is centralised or divided. Most models characterise political power as divisive and there are many political actors in the system who have equal access to political power. For example, Bevir and Rhodes' (2008) differentiated polity model assumes that the power is diffuse beyond core executive and variety of policy networks play a key role in policymaking. However, Marsh, Richards and Smith (2003) argue that the political system is closed and elitist, so the political process is dominated by one party; in this case, it is dominated by the executive. This article states that in the Malaysian context, this power is vested only in the prime minister, which makes him the most powerful political actor.

Under this pretext, the policymaking is closely controlled by the well-connected people and those associated with the prime minister especially from within the same political party. Interviews conducted have confirmed this argument. For example, the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department for Economic Affairs, Mustapa Mohamed (2021) stressed that: Control over this policy was necessary to ensure that the government's objectives and goals were easily achieved. Therefore, ensuring that people understand the will and commitment of this government is essential so that what is promised can be fulfilled. Due to this, it is the responsibility and absolute power of the prime minister to ensure that people who truly understand him are given this power and responsibility.

This enables him to control not only the political process but also the political institutions, thus creating a centralisation of power in the hands of the prime minister and making him the dominant political player. The position of the prime minister is further strengthened by the support of those who have access to the prime minister such as the elite in the country.

Structural inequality is an important issue that is often omitted from political discussions. Many studies indirectly proved the existence of inequalities in Malaysia. However, these studies and discussions do not emphasise the inherent inequality especially in discussing the prime minister's power. Slater (2003) in the discussion on the personalisation of power by the prime minister in Malaysia argued that an autocratic individual had played a vital role in Malaysian politics. Yet, no explanation was provided as to why personalisation of power occurs. Therefore, to conceptualise Malaysian politics, this paper begins by acknowledging that there are structured inequalities and that those who control politics have an absolute advantage in the political system and process.

Another crucial element in the asymmetric power model is a strong executive. Despite changes in the political system characterised by the emergence of various political actors, this model assumes that a strong executive still exists in the political system. Marsh et al. (2001 & 2003) stressed that political power continues to be concentrated in the executive as the policy-making body. Studies and analyses of political systems conducted in western countries have proven that the strength of the government can be maintained due to the existence of a dominant executive in the political system. This was evident during the Tony Blair administration in the United Kingdom when significant reform was initiated since 1997 to streamline the activities and strengthen the capacity of the Prime Minister's Office and the Cabinet Office to support the prime minister and assist in public service delivery (Burch & Holliday, 2004). In Malaysia too, the existence of a strong executive is the core of government stability since independence. For example, the creation of a strong central government with the power concentrated in the hand of the prime minister has become a common practice in the administration (Funston, 2016). While space is given to various actors to voice their views, executive control over national policy and governance is tight.

### **Literature review: Prime minister's power in Malaysia**

The power of the prime minister exercised by Malaysia is not much different from countries that employ the Westminster system. What is interesting is that this system has evolved and assimilated with local political systems and traditions. As averred by Patapan and Wanna (2005), the dynamics of the Westminster system have made it easily acceptable and adaptable. For this reason, the functions of the prime minister and executive in the Westminster system have been interestingly studied in more depth.

In Malaysia, a study on the power of the prime minister was written by Johnson & Milner (2005) in their book *Westminster legacies*. However, this study is general in nature as it only touches on the power of the prime minister in the Westminster system in Malaysia. This study argues that the Westminster system has ensured the key role of the executive especially the prime minister in the political process. The system was designed so that the centralisation of power could create a strong central government, thus enabling the prime minister to control politics not only at the federal level but also at the state government level.

The power possessed by the prime minister is not absolute. The prime minister is bound by limitations in carrying out his duties, which become his main challenges. Despite having the power to determine the line-up of cabinets that would assist his administration, the prime minister is bound by the collective responsibility practised in the Westminster system. Lesley (2014) in his paper *Mapping a transformation journey: A strategy for Malaysia's future, 2009–*

2010 examined the formation of the prime ministerial team to transform Malaysia. It argues that the biggest challenge faced by the Najib administration was to form a cabinet that could work together in achieving the set strategic direction. To achieve this goal, a cabinet workshop was held to enable dialogue sessions so that the ideological differences of cabinet members are set aside and move towards the same goal.

Although the Westminster model states that the power of the prime minister is limited, the power of the prime minister in Malaysia is growing. Slater (2003) in his article *Iron cage in an iron fist: Authoritarian institutions and the personalization of power in Malaysia* examined the personalisation of power that occurs in Malaysia. In his analysis, Slater (2003) stated that the increase in power can be seen during the administration of Dr Mahathir Mohamad (1981 to 2003), which allowed him to control the cabinet and concentrate power in his hands until he was called an autocratic leader. Not only has he centralised power in his hands, but Mahathir has also acted to control the policy-making process that was previously the joint responsibility of the executive. In addition, to maintain his power and influence to control the executive body, Slater (2003) stated that Mahathir also made the country's main policy as a tool to control the executive body. During his administration, Mahathir introduced the Industrial Policy to produce more Malay entrepreneurs. Vision 2020 was introduced by Mahathir in the early 1990s, which outlined the country's plan to achieve developed country status by 2020. Changes in the landscape of economic development by Mahathir at that time showed that the prime minister had successfully played a key role in determining the direction of the country.

From the literature, it can be concluded that the dominance of the prime ministers exists due to the role and power they possess. Coupled with the majority support in the house of Representatives, most prime ministers exhibit their control not just in the administration, but also the capabilities to control other government institutions. Still, what is interesting to study is how the prime minister's administration after 2018, especially during the Muhyiddin era was able to survive when it only had a slim and disputable majority. Therefore, the next section maps out the strategies used by Muhyiddin to sustain his position.

## **Research methodology**

This article used a qualitative research method. This method was chosen because it is exploratory in nature allowing a phenomenon to be understood in more depth, thus validating the argument made.

Interviews were seen as the only way to obtain information directly from the informants about the subject to be studied. Through this method, several individuals were identified and selected due to their role and position in Malaysian politics. The informants selected were the leader of the opposition Anwar Ibrahim, the Minister in Prime Minister's Department for Economic Affairs Mustapa Mohamed, Minister in Prime Minister's Department for Parliament, and Law Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, and MP for Kangar Amin Ahmad.

Secondary data were also used in this article. The data from books, journals, and government documents were gathered to complement the primary data obtained. These documents can be used to complement and substantiate other data sources (such as interviews) besides determining events and issues in more detail compared to other sources of information.

The data obtained then were analysed qualitatively. The focus was emphasised on the data that directly address the research question of what makes the prime minister dominant. Each data was then compiled to form a theme that elaborates on the prime minister's domination.

### **Muhyiddin's appointment as prime minister**

The power transition from Mahathir to Anwar was not a secret, but unfortunately, Mahathir's inconsistent statements of the date of power transfer caused concern among Anwar's supporters in the government. Relentless pressure eventually led to tensions that split the PH coalition. This rift led Mahathir's party, Bersatu (Malaysian United Indigenous Party) to leave the PH coalition, which caused the collapse of the PH administration due to its dwindling majority. What made matters worse was Mahathir's resignation as prime minister despite having the power to resolve the conflict. Mahathir's resignation paved the way for the appointment of a new prime minister.

However, since no party had a convincing majority to form a government, the king had to intervene to resolve the issue (Aljazeera, 2020). Each party was ordered by the king to nominate a prime ministerial candidate. Anwar and Mahathir were each nominated, but these nominations did not convince the king. Unexpectedly, after several meetings with the members of parliament, the king appointed Muhyiddin Yassin as the prime minister. Muhyiddin was supported by Bersatu, the Pan Islamic Party (PAS), Barisan Nasional (BN), Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) and the independent parliamentarians (The Star, 2020).

After his appointment, Muhyiddin's first few moves were crucial in depicting the power he possessed. To ensure his control over parliament, Muhyiddin tabled a motion to remove the speaker of the house. Despite being disputed by opposition lawmakers; the motion was passed. This was a breach of parliamentary custom because changing the speaker for no good reason had never happened before in any Malaysian parliament (Arfa Yunus, 2020). After becoming prime minister, Muhyiddin faced several challenges, but the power vested in the post enabled him to survive. The ultimate challenge was a proposed no-confidence vote against him, which was deflected by the newly appointed speaker of the house. This raised an important question: how can a prime minister with a dubious majority still dominate the political process?

### **Asymmetrical power and the domination of the prime minister in Malaysia**

Most Malaysian prime ministers have sustained their power and position because of the nature of the asymmetrical advantages. Power imbalances have predominantly allowed the prime minister to play a central role and dominate other actors in any governing process (Jensen & Seeberg, 2015). This asymmetrical power works perfectly well in a system that embraces hierarchy as the dominant mode of governance, suggesting that the unequal distributions of resources within the executive privileges the prime minister and disadvantages others.

As the power is asymmetrically distributed, the prime minister became highly resourced and has wide-ranging powers with which to retain influence and power that are unavailable to other actors beyond the centre. Post-independence Malaysia saw prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman concentrate power in his hands but still give the executive the freedom to function democratically (Funston, 2016). However, prime minister Abdul Razak initiated action to control the cabinet and parliament more tightly immediately after the 13 May 1969 racial riot through the enforcement of The Emergency (Public Order and Crime Prevention) Ordinance, 1969.

Through this ordinance, the prime minister has almost infinite power to control not only the central government but also the state government. Minister in the prime minister's department for parliamentary and law Wan Junaidi (2021) asserted:

*This ordinance has been used to introduce new laws such as the Petroleum Development Act (PDA), 1974, which has taken away the right of the state government to the natural resources.*

The Muhyiddin administration saw for the umpteenth time a prime minister using all available power to defend his position. Due to his weak position, all forms of support were fully utilised to enable him to remain in power. First, the Muhyiddin-led Perikatan Nasional (PN) focused on inter-party relations to ensure that the prime minister retains power despite the disputed majority. Among the methods used by Muhyiddin are by promoting members of parliament who support the government to important positions such as cabinet posts and the government-linked company (GLC) to consolidate his power. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, former deputy prime minister, admitted that this political appointment was to ensure that the government's aspirations are achieved (Palansamy, 2020). However, this move was heavily criticised especially as it depicted a desperate move of a prime minister. For example, MP for Kangar Amin Ahmad (2021) emphasised:

*Appointing MPs to GLC posts are just an effort to ensure continued support for the prime minister. This is a waste of resources because the government is not putting the right people in the right place.*

Although Muhyiddin was criticised for making this move, it did not stop him from retaining his position. This urged Muhyiddin to use his power to resist all forms of pressure. In January 2021, he announced an emergency proclamation that gave full power to the government and suspended parliament under the pretext of controlling the pandemic that had hit Malaysia. This sealed the administrative power of the country in the hands of the prime minister as it could not be challenged.

This section has mapped out the centralised institutional setting that produced the asymmetrical power resulting in the predominance of the prime minister. The prime minister has used this inherent advantage to consolidate not only his administrative power but also the political power especially in controlling the parliament. The next three sections justify the claims of this article.

### **Highly centralised federalist system: an inherent advantage for the prime minister**

The origin of centralisation in Malaysia can be traced back to the Federal Constitution that ensured the continuation of central dominance. The Federal Constitution, the basis of power in the federation, was designed in a top-heavy manner that defines the scope of federal-state relations (Mohammad Agus, 2006). The practice of centralisation in Malaysia has not only resulted in the establishment of a dominant central government but also prime ministerial domination. As a result, Malaysia never experienced a change of the government at the federal level until 2018.

Under Muhyiddin, a different approach to centralisation was used. Punishment, such as denying the rights of the state governments, has been the main method of federal control over them. The use of this method of managing the pandemic has denied state governments' involvement in crisis management. Since March 2020, absolute power has been given to the

National Security Council (NSC), which is chaired by the prime minister, to manage the pandemic. For example, in March 2020, state governments ruled by opposition parties at the central level were denied their right to attend special meetings to coordinate movement control orders even though these states were badly affected by the pandemic (Mukhriz, 2020). These states were again denied rights in October 2020 when the NSC met again to coordinate the growing management of Covid-19 in Malaysia. The centralisation of crisis management provided no space for the states to manage this crisis but was used to consolidate the prime minister's power.

What is even more surprising is that Muhyiddin has used the proclamation of an emergency in January 2021 to further strengthen his power. The proclamation also denied the rights and powers of the state governments. Even more worrying is that under this emergency ordinance, the parliament and the state legislative assembly were suspended from performing their democratic duty, thus putting the country under the sole administration of the prime minister. The use of the emergency ordinance successfully prevented parliament from challenging Muhyiddin's power. Commenting on the proclamation of emergency, the Opposition Leader, Anwar Ibrahim emphasised:

*The proclamation of emergency and the suspension of parliament is an undemocratic move, and it has absolutely nothing to do with the move to control the pandemic, instead, it is only intended to maintain the power of the government.*

Although there was an argument over whether the parliament could convene, Muhyiddin took steps not to reconvene parliament even though the king thought otherwise (Firdaus Azil, 2021). This saved Muhyiddin's and his cabinet's position for seven months and all their actions over this period were immune from being questioned. This situation indicates the existence of an asymmetrical power that gave the prime minister an advantage to act in defending his position. Despite the pressure from many quarters, it has failed to stop the prime minister since the final power lies with him.

To further strengthen federal power, some states were denied rights to Covid-19 data sharing. Selangor, for example, was left clueless in its Covid-19 response after the Health Ministry stopped sharing crucial data on positive cases with the state government, thus hindering Selangor from executing public health strategies to address the pandemic (Malaysiakini, 2020). This denial of state government's rights clearly shows how this imbalanced power exists in the Malaysian political system. The federal government can at any time use its existing powers to deny the rights of a state government and it cannot be challenged.

The situation discussed above has proved that the centralisation of power can give almost absolute power to the prime minister to control the country's political system. Centralisation as emphasised through the asymmetric power model can provide space for the prime minister to exploit the situation and create a state of almost absolute power, which in turn caused him to be seen as a dictator. Although the prime minister does not have strong support, his position as head of the government clearly gives him an inherent advantage to dominate the political process.

### **One-party domination: the prime minister's avenues for controlling the states**

Malaysian politics at the central level before 2018 was dominated by one party that furthered the centralisation. Due to the hegemony of the BN at the federal level, state governments acted as extensions of the central government rather than as partners in the federation (Zawiyah, 2021).

Since the same political party governed the federal administration and the states, federal-state relations were characterised by inter- or intra-party relations. Through intra-party control, BN state governments behaved more like branches than partners of the federal government.

After the change of administration in 2018, the coalition practices under PH were different from what Malaysia had experienced under BN. Although the principle of centralisation was still intact, the PH coalition was not dominated by any party members. Mahathir was appointed as the chairman of the coalition and was nominated as the prime minister, but his party only held 16 out of 119 parliamentary seats (Wan Saiful, 2020). This made the PH hierarchy vulnerable as the absolute support for the prime minister only came from a minority group in PH (Nashril-Abaidah & Mohammad Agus, 2021). The hierarchy is the foundation of the prime minister's domination, and this fragile hierarchy has made it difficult for Mahathir to fully dominate the political process.

Learning the lesson from the PH, Muhyiddin took this matter seriously in defending the fragile hierarchy, although the new PN administration has the same fragile hierarchy. Muhyiddin took several actions to ensure his domination. First, he focused on intra-party relations. Among his first steps was the appointment of 31 ministers. Ten portfolios were allocated to Bersatu even though it had the lowest number of MPs in the new coalition. Most cabinet members from his party were important for ensuring support and eventually letting Muhyiddin dominate the political process. Criticisms of the relatively large cabinet did not deter Muhyiddin; he even appointed 38 deputy ministers, making it among the largest in Malaysia's history. Apart from cabinet positions, the appointment of 29 politicians to GLC posts was also used by Muhyiddin to gain the support of MPs (Gomez, 2020). These appointments were necessary to ensure additional support from the PN coalition and most importantly as a vital step in enabling Muhyiddin to control the parliament.

The second step taken by Muhyiddin was to ensure party support to plan a change in the administration of the state governments. After the 2018 election, PH controlled eight of the thirteen states, thus ensuring staunch state support. After taking over the central government in March 2020, Muhyiddin's position became weaker due to the lack of support from the state governments. Several measures were quickly introduced to snatch the state government from PH. The most prominent measure used by the Muhyiddin-led PN was party-switching among the PH state legislative assembly members. As a result, five PH-led states, such as Kedah, Johor, Perak, Melaka, and Sabah fell under the PN. Under the pretext of political realignment, the seizure of PH-led state governments was done to strengthen the position of the prime minister and enable him to control the states.

Control over the states directly enabled Muhyiddin to control the resources available to the state governments. To strengthen his position and support, the available positions at the state level and the government link company (GLC) were also distributed to his supporters (Gomez, 2020). This would be unlikely to occur without structural inequalities in the political system. These inequalities resulted in the prime minister holding almost all the powers available to him to ensure his position.

The discussion above has shown how Muhyiddin strengthened the party to maintain his position. This strength allowed more support to be given to the prime minister. The strong support gained made it possible for him to dominate the political process. The structured inequalities embedded in the political structure has given him an inherent advantage.



## The prime minister's control over parliament

The prime minister's control over parliament is one of the structural imbalances in Malaysia's political system. It enabled the prime minister to do whatever was necessary to maintain his position. However, the form of control that occurred is not absolute because there are still legal boundaries that restrict executives from making it so. In the context of Malaysia, however, this control is seen as absolute and continues to give an advantage to the executive, especially the prime minister, in controlling parliament. The Muhyiddin administration set a precedent in the parliamentary system when the elected speaker was replaced in June 2020 (The Edge Market, 2021). This shows the considerable power of the prime minister to control parliamentary order. This can only happen when there is a structural imbalance that gives power to the prime minister.

The proclamation of a state of emergency and the suspension of parliament in January 2021 were also steps taken by Muhyiddin to control the parliament. This proclamation was implemented on the pretext of fighting Covid-19 that was on the rise in Malaysia. Nevertheless, the suspension of parliament was seen as allowing the prime minister to run the administration without the need to be accountable to the parliament. The proclamation was never tabled and debated in parliament. It was ostensibly the prime minister's initiative alone allowing him to have more freedom and power. The power of the prime minister allowed him to advise the king on the need to declare a state of emergency, which was something that could not be challenged in court. Article 150(1) of the federal constitution provides the king with the power to declare a state of emergency after obtaining advice from the prime minister. However, the king issued a statement on February 24 clarifying that parliament can be convened, prorogued, or dissolved during a state of emergency on a date deemed suitable by the king after considering the premier's advice (Tan, 2021). Even so, this grand decree was not confirmed by Muhyiddin.

The main factor leading Muhyiddin to ignore the king's view was that he had a majority that was never tested in parliament (John & Benny, 2020). Muhyiddin has never proved to parliament that he has the minimum 112 MPs' votes to allow him to form a government. Even though the budget had passed, only 111 MPs voted in favour, showing that Muhyiddin had failed to prove his majority (Tan, 2021). The suspension of parliament can be therefore seen as an effective step to continue to maintain power without interference from the opposition. It was seen as a move by Muhyiddin to squash a potentially destabilising political rebellion. Therefore, it is inevitable that the prime minister would be accused of using the emergency and refusing to call parliament as an elaborate effort to protect his weak position since under the emergency, Muhyiddin has had broad and enhanced powers to enact new laws as emergency ordinances without legislative scrutiny.

Despite gaining control of the parliament, the Muhyiddin administration eventually had to comply with a call by the king to convene a parliamentary session before August to allow lawmakers to debate the government's move to tackle the Covid pandemic (Firdaus Azil, 2021). Eventually, Muhyiddin decided to hold a special parliamentary sitting for five days starting on July 26 to allow lawmakers to be briefed on a national recovery plan. This raised a protest by opposition MPs as no debate was allowed in the sitting. The Opposition Leader, Anwar Ibrahim (2021) emphasised:

*The reopening of parliament is important to ensure the transparency and accountability of parliament can be maintained. However, if the parliament cannot function as it should, how can the check and balance system work in the country. What these extracts*

*confirmed is that the parliament is tightly controlled by the government to ensure no challenge to the government during the session.*

This special parliamentary session, however, has been the main cause of the downfall of the Muhyiddin administration when the *de facto* law minister Takiyuddin Hassan made an announcement that the emergency ordinances introduced during the state of emergency had been revoked on July 21 (Elly Fazaniza, 2021). Muhyiddin's troubles deepened after the king rebuked a government minister for misleading parliament on the status of ordinances related to the state of emergency. Chaos erupted following the king's intervention, with opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim urging Muhyiddin to take responsibility and step down. This situation once again forced Muhyiddin to manipulate the sitting by suspending the session following the health ministry's view that the parliament was a locality of risk for the possible transmission of Covid-19.

## Conclusion

Malaysia's federal system operates with a highly structured imbalance. This has resulted not just in the establishment of a dominant central government but also in a dominant key figure in the administration – the prime minister. For decades, prime ministers have used the advantages of the post to secure their position. The resource advantage obtained through the position has enabled successive prime ministers to redefine the role and preserve its centrality in the political process. Malaysia's historical setting described above is the explanation of the prime ministers' domination. Coupled with the Westminster system inherited from the colonial legacy, it has created an institutionalised asymmetrical predominance that permits the prime minister to redefine his role to ensure centrality in the delivery and the implementation of public policy. Overall, this article has shown that structural inequality has given Muhyiddin the advantage of maintaining his control over national politics. This possessed advantage also provided an opportunity for Muhyiddin to form a strong executive through command and control which was eventually successfully used to strengthen his position.

This article does not, however, offer a hermetically sealed concept. Although the prime minister has almost absolute power to dominate Malaysia's politics, he is not immune from being challenged. What happened in 2018 when Najib's BN lost the election and in 2020 when Mahathir was overthrown by his own party is enough to show that the power of a prime minister has its limits. Although the Westminster model and political practices give the prime minister an advantage, there are times when this power can still be challenged, but still allow a prime minister to remain in power even with a slim majority. However, if the power is used not according to the will of the people, it will ultimately affect the position of the sitting prime minister. The fall of Muhyiddin in August 2021 is a clear example that although the prime minister has enormous power, he can still be overthrown.

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