

## **Dr M: Muhyiddin can be PM, but I'm not sure...**

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**By Nigel Aw**

Former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin is the most eligible to take over as prime minister, but refused to endorse him.

A disenchanted Mahathir said he has "lost faith" after two of his successors did not turn out as he hoped they would.

"You know, I have lost faith in people. Before they get appointed, they are the cleanest people in the world, the least corrupt people in the world, but when they get some authority, they misbehave themselves.

"So I don't know," lamented Mahathir when asked on his thoughts about Muhyiddin replacing Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

Earlier, Mahathir had called for Najib to step down and said according to procedure, the next in line for the post would be Muhyiddin.

"That is for the party to decide. There are people quite qualified but if you go according to the party constitution, the person most eligible would be the deputy," he told a press conference in Cyberjaya today.

Mahathir had previously attacked his immediate successor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi over policy disagreements, forcing the latter into an early retirement.

The Umno veteran had on Thursday also declared open war with Najib, and today reiterated that the prime minister is plagued by too many scandals and has not responded.

### **Open fight**

Mahathir said prior to the open hostilities, he had heeded advice to voice his grouses behind closed doors but to no avail.

"The other side said we should have a quiet chat, but we have passed that stage already. The quiet chat has been carried out.

"I have even tried intermediaries. This is the last resort - that I have to come out in the public," he said.

He added that talks about Umno secretary-general Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor mediating was mooted by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Shahidan Kassim but it never materialised, nor has the man himself taken the initiative to do so.

Despite the disagreements with Najib, Mahathir said he will not resign from Umno like he did when in confrontation with Abdullah.

"I am for Umno. I only disagree with the leadership... Last time (I resigned from Umno, it) was because I could not make any headway," he said.

Mahathir also hit out at party leaders who criticised him for publicly taking on the prime minister, demanding to know if they had actually questioned Najib about issues such as the massive debt of 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB).

"Have they asked Najib and did he answer? Najib has never responded.

"Even during the gatherings of Umno division leaders, it was never specifically explained.

"There were even instructions not to raise it; this is not a reply," he said.

He added that Najib may be the president but he does not necessarily enjoy majority support at the party's election system which is chosen by Umno divisions, instead of popular vote.

Mahathir also took aim at Najib's policy of cash handouts, particularly Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia, calling it the "greatest mistake" of the current government.

"The biggest mistake is to change our value system from believing in principles to material.

"If you get something for yourself, I support you, but If you don't get, then you don't support. That will lead the country to a bad future," he said.