

All eyes on Muhyiddin as Dr M pressure cooks Najib

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If the art of politics can be compared to chess, then it is without doubt that former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad is a grandmaster.

In a devastating move last week, observers claimed that he could have checkmated Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

Last Thursday, he had implied a link between Najib and the murder of Altantuya Shaariibuu despite the police having cleared the prime minister.

Two days later, Mahathir, in another strike, said Sirul Azhar Umar did not kill people when the former police commando was part of his security detail.

Najib has remained silent thus far, perhaps fusing his cerebrum and consulting his strategists on how to avoid vacating Sri Perdana.

As rightly pointed out by some, his interests are too entrenched for him to step down without a fight like his predecessor, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The focus now is on Muhyiddin Yassin.

Realigning allegiances

Speculation had been rife that the deputy premier is one of the chess pieces on Mahathir's side of the board.

He has not mentioned a word in defence of his boss or in criticism of Mahathir unlike a certain Oxford-trained politician, who called on Najib to answer the queries raised, suggesting that he should not behave like an ostrich and stick his head into the sand.

This came as a surprise since Khairy Jamaluddin is seen as being far from fond of Mahathir and an ardent supporter of Najib, defending the latter countless of times against the opposition.

Perhaps, Khairy sensed a storm brewing and opted to sail in the opposite direction instead of being shipwrecked.

As for Muhyiddin, he had recently appeared to contradict Najib on the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), warning against a government bailout.

Learning from Hang Jebat

Since then, he has chosen to remain below the media glare, regularly avoiding reporters whenever he appears in public.

Although Mahathir did not wish to endorse Muhyiddin as Najib's successor, lamenting that his choices in the past have been disappointing, a veteran newsman close to the former premier noted that the deputy premier is the natural choice.

"For months, the expectation has been that Muhyiddin will lead the charge. But he has been blowing hot and cold, and many observers think that he would not mount an open challenge.

"He has been speaking out against 1MDB but unless he states his stand openly, Umno is not likely to rally behind him to shoo Najib away from Putrajaya.

"Like the legendary (Hang) Jebat, he risks being done in by Najib's 'Hang Tuahs,'" said Kadir Jasin in a blog posting.

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