

Muhyiddin sounds like PM-in-waiting

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COMMENT Najib Abdul Razak has put his foot down. But he chose to do this on Sabah soil.

After weeks of sniping from the sidelines, the prime minister removed his gloves and administered Dr Mahathir Mohamad with a well-deserved drubbing for giving the impression that he is faultless.

After the Tabung Haji-1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) land deal debacle pinned him into a corner, Najib perhaps had little choice.

The pilgrimage fund conundrum witnessed Umno leaders joining hands with the opposition to express concern and criticism.

Among them, was his cousin Hishammuddin Hussein. In politics, blood can sometimes become thinner than water, depending on the risks involved.

The strongest rebuke came from Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, who blamed the 1MDB issue for BN's defeat in the Permatang Pauh by-election.

He also remarked that Mahathir is not alone in seeking answers on the debt-laden firm's transactions.

This led to speculation that Muhyiddin is finally making a stand and sending out the message that he is prepared to take over the reins.

Muhyiddin singing new tune

And his message in conjunction with Umno's anniversary lent credence to the perception that a new number one is in the making.

Though Najib rode into power promising moderation and transformation, Umno, however, has veered to the right under his stewardship.

Muhyiddin, on the other hand, was always regarded as a racist leader, whose declaration of being Malay first and Malaysian second had cemented this notion.

Even BN component parties are said to have strong reservations about him.

An Umno leader often uses race and religion to rise up the ranks. But when he is on the verge of becoming prime minister, he croons a different tune.

Hence, Muhyiddin is now urging Umno to steer clear of racism and remain on the track of

moderation instead.

He warned that racism and extremism could destroy the foundations of Malaysia and that the party must protect the legitimate rights of other races and ensure their religious freedom.

The ball is now in Umno's court.

Given that the Tabung Haji issue has struck at the heart of its support base, continuing to back Najib could put the entire Umno at risk in the next general election.

So would Umno make a stand, and tell their president to leave?

As for giving Mahathir an acerbic tongue-lashing, Najib could have dug his own grave as the octogenarian might now rummage deeper into the closet in search of more detrimental skeletons.

Perhaps this would expedite the supposed telephone conversation between the former premier and Sirul Azhar Umar?

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