

'What's the big deal in DPM attacking 'eunuchs?'

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By Adrian Wong

If the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) saga is analysed along the lines of an ancient Chinese dynasty, a political observer believes Muhyiddin Yassin's attack is nothing substantial.

The deputy prime minister, said Wong Chin Huat, did not target the "emperor or his ministers" but rather the "eunuchs" - the 1MDB board of directors.

"What is the big deal (of Muhyiddin) targeting the board? This is simply slashing the eunuchs but not the ministers.

"He did not even touch Abdul Azeez Abdul Rahim, who is the Lembaga Tabung Haji president," the Penang Institute fellow told Malaysiakini.

However, he pointed out if Muhyiddin starts shooting at Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's men, it would mean the number two has amassed enough troops to burn the bridges with his boss.

A leaked video of the Umno deputy president's closed door meeting with Umno leaders revealed Muhyiddin calling for the 1MDB directors to be sacked and investigated.

Muhyiddin said he conveyed his advice to Najib but nothing happened. However, he stressed he was not planning to oust the prime minister.

'Tip of the iceberg'

Wong, a political scientist, said the rift between the top two leaders was evident ever since Muhyiddin told Dr Mahathir Mohamad that he is not alone.

The former premier, who has been calling for Najib's resignation, lamented that he was alone in pursuing the truth.

Wong believes Muhyiddin's latest move is only the "tip of the iceberg" and should not be construed as an open declaration of war against Najib.

"The fighting between Muhyiddin and Najib has never ceased.

"Is Muhyiddin pressing harder? Yes. Is it worsening? Yes. Has it reached a critical point, where it is irreversible? I don't think so," he said.

"How do we know when it is a war? The most direct one would be asking Najib to step down. The second would be demanding him to hand over the finance minister post," he

noted, adding that the post holds the resources for patronage.

'No drawing blood during Ramadan'

Meanwhile, DAP political education director Liew Chin Tong pointed out that the timing of Muhyiddin's move - prior to Ramadan - is also an important factor.

This, he said, is to avoid conflict during the sacred month in the Islamic calendar.

"Ramadan starts from June 18, after that, it would be Aidilfitri. This would be two months. Usually nobody draws blood during Ramadan.

"Thus, if you want to end Najib, you need to do it before Ramadan," he told Malaysiakini.

If Najib manages to survive, Liew said the prime minister might be able to prolong his political career for a few more months.

"I think they (Najib's detractors) cannot wait any longer, so they started a move now (before Ramadan). Now we need to see how Najib would react," he said.

'Muhyiddin playing hardball'

For Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia(UKM) Associate Professor Mohammad Agus Yusoff, Muhyiddin's latest statement is nothing more than an Umno leader expressing concern over the debt-laden state investment fund.

Among Umno leaders, he pointed out, there are two "schools of thought" on the 1MDB issue.

"One says wait for the audit report before further action is taken, whereas others urge the authorities to take swift and firm action.

"I don't think this is a break-up. This is merely an Umno leader showing responsibility and concern.

"Muhyiddin appears to be playing hardball as he needs to show his energy in the face of hundreds of Umno members (at the meeting). Moreover, he didn't know the video would be leaked," he said.

This was echoed by National Professors' Council head of political cluster Mustafa Ishak, who added that it was not uncommon for Umno leaders to have "differences of opinions" on issues