

## **A conundrum known as Muhyiddin Yassin**

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COMMENT So what is it going to be, Mr Deputy Prime Minister?

Many people, at least the keen followers of our country's volatile politics like me, are waiting for your next move.

At this very moment, Muhyiddin Yassin is at a crossroads. He is in a difficult situation - a bit of a quandary, as the British would say.

And yet, he is also in an enviable position any Malaysian leader would aspire to - an opportunity to be at the pinnacle of his political career.

Many politicians would give their right arm to be in that same position.

The word 'crossroads' has two distinct meanings. One says it is a road that crosses a main road or joins two main roads. An intersection, if you like.

Another meaning states it is a point at which a crucial decision must be made that will have far-reaching consequences.

Muhyiddin is now at that point.

He has two choices: Whether to sink or swim with Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, or quit the cabinet and prepare for his next battle.

Muhyiddin at present is not the same person I wrote about almost two months ago, when I asked in an article whether he is the next prime minister and the need for him to make a stand.

### **A big statement**

I don't wish to repeat most of the things I said then, but suffice to say that I am pleasantly surprised.

Oh my! The video recording. He was making a big, big statement.

No doubt he did not make an open declaration. No doubt it was his personal view. But Muhyiddin went right to the core of Najib's vulnerability - the 1MDB issue.

So for me, he has made a stand. Now what should he do?

All I can say is that the argument in support of him quitting the cabinet is pretty strong.

Any first-year law student who has read constitutional law as a subject will be able to tell you about a minister's responsibility in the cabinet.

To quote Wikipedia:

"Cabinet collective responsibility is a constitutional convention in governments using the Westminster system that members of the cabinet must publicly support all governmental decisions made in the cabinet, even if they do not privately agree with them.

"This support includes voting for the government in the legislature. If a member of the cabinet does wish to openly object to a cabinet decision then they are obliged to resign from their position in the cabinet."

### **Speech to Umno grassroots**

Fellow cabinet member Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said something similar on Thursday without alluding to the convention we inherited from our colonial masters.

Let me ask you. Muhyiddin giving a speech to Umno grassroots - although closed-door: is that private?

I don't think so.

I believe quitting the cabinet now will elevate Muhyiddin to a higher stature in the eyes of neutrals, and certainly would endear him more to his supporters.

Yes, I agree too, that by quitting, he may miss the chance of becoming the next prime minister. It would be just like the last runner in a 4x100m relay dropping the baton.

So what? It's just the SEA Games. The Olympics is coming next year in the form of Umno elections.

I did say, in same article, that going after Najib's post would be political suicide for Muhyiddin as no incumbent president has ever lost in the history of the party.

However, with the situation Muhyiddin is in right now, he does not have much of a choice.

### **Ultimatum given**

The question is why Najib gave his ultimatum - to dissenting ministers on 1MDB to resign - last Friday when Muhyiddin was not around?

Could it be that Najib had already spoken to Muhyiddin before he left for his holidays, wherein Muhyiddin had made his intentions clear?

About the same time Muhyiddin returned on Tuesday night, another meeting of ministers

was held. That special meeting, reportedly on 1MDB, went till midnight.

Muhyiddin knew about the meeting which he could have attended but didn't. Probably he was too tired or he just did not want to hear anything more about 1MDB.

Another incident which caught my attention was the small crowd which turned up at KLIA to greet Muhyiddin on his return from overseas, and chanting "Save Malaysia".

When was the last time we heard such a chant greeting him? Never, in my recollection.

It shows that some Umno members, maybe a small number now, are looking at Muhyiddin as the saviour.

You can accuse me of reading too much into all these. I have to because I am trying to make sense of it all.

For all we know, Najib and Muhyiddin could have just said to each other: "Bro, we go a long way. Let's just agree to disagree on 1MDB. On all other issues, we just stick with this cabinet and fight together."

Possible, but not likely.

So what is it that Muhyiddin should do?

I know. He should do the right thing - take the highway, and fight another day.

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