

Muhyiddin prepares defence against rumoured sacking

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Umno insiders say that there is no valid reason to sack deputy president Muhyiddin Yassin when the party supreme council meets on Sept 9 over his stand against party president Najib Abdul Razak over the 1MDB scandal.

Malaysiakini understands that Muhyiddin, who just returned from Australia, held a meeting with his team recently to discuss the Umno showdown on Wednesday.

Those close to the number two in the party are said to be taking no chances and are reviewing all possibilities in case he is set up for sacking on grounds that the speeches he had made on the issue is considered to be against the party or the president.

The source noted that: "There is no mention of any supreme council agenda on the matter (sacking of Muhyiddin). However, we are not taking any chances".

Muhyiddin and Umno vice-president Shafie Apdal were sacked from Najib's cabinet on July 29.

Wednesday will see the first party supreme council meeting after their controversial sacking. An earlier meeting was put off and party leaders said the supreme council would instead meet after all 191 party divisions have finished their annual general meetings this weekend.

There was speculation in social media earlier this week suggesting that Muhyiddin and Shafie would be given the boot by the party.

Also to be sacked, according to the messages, were Kedah Menteri Besar Mukhriz Mahathir, Kulim Bandar Baru MP Aziz Sheikh Fadzir, former Terengganu menteri besar Ahmad Said, former Perak exco member Hamidah Osman and Sepanggar MP Jumat Idris.

'Sackings won't happen'

Umno deputy chairperson Mohamed Aziz, who is also Johor assembly speaker, expressed concern that the supreme council meeting may witness the axing of Muhyiddin and Shafie, which he described as an unwise move.

An academician at a public university, however, thinks no action would be taken against Muhyiddin and Shafie because there is already a lot of dissatisfaction among Umno members.

"The party itself is facing a crisis of confidence and is uncomfortable with the president. Such a move would only fuel hatred further, especially after Bersih 4.

“We have seen Langkawi Wanita Umno member Anina Saadudin filing a suit and Muhyiddin's removal from the cabinet which is not well-accepted in Johor,” he said on condition of anonymity when contacted by Malaysiakini.

“Added to this was former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad, still popular in Umno, calling for the party president to step down,” he observed.

“Najib is known not take big risks with the exception of Muhyiddin's removal on July 29 for which we are seeing the repercussions.

“Looking at the current situation and the mood of the general public after Bersih 4, it (the sackings) will not happen.”

May trigger an even bigger crisis

Describing the present situation in Umno as a possible time bomb, the academician said there was a lot of discontent in the Malay nationalist party and the rumoured expulsions may trigger an even bigger crisis.

Hedging his bets, however, he also opined that even if the sackings took place, they wouldn't have a big an impact as former party deputy president Anwar Ibrahim in 1998.

Meanwhile, a total 188 Umno divisions have already held their AGMs with Najib's Pekan division, Malacca's Masjid Tanah division and the Pasir Salak division having theirs this weekend.

Former Umno leader and current Perkasa president, Ibrahim Ali, in a text message to Malaysiakini also said he does not believe Muhyiddin and Shafie will be sacked.

“I do not think the Umno president and the supreme council will create further problems. What happens in Umno involves the political stability in the country as Umno is the backbone,” said the former Pasir Mas Umno division chief.

“I believe the supreme council and Najib will make a smart decision. Hence, I do not believe that Muhyiddin will be sacked despite the rumours. Let us wait and see,” said Ibrahim.

Should Umno sack Muhyiddin, the biggest winner will certainly be Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who is presently the senior-most party vice-president.

This will effectively remove his most immediate rival from staking a claim to the prime minister's post should Najib step down in the near future.