

Umno No 2 Muhyiddin stripped of party duties

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Muhyiddin Yassin may still be Umno deputy president on paper but the former deputy prime minister's party functions are gradually being stripped away.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak avoided plunging Umno deeper into crisis by not sacking Muhyiddin from the party after removing him as deputy prime minister, but resorted to a workaround by sidelining the Umno number two.

This speculation is fuelled by a letter issued by Umno secretary-general Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor (photo) to party leaders yesterday which announced a "war room meeting" by the party's General Elections Coordination and Operations Centre (GCOC).

By convention, the GCOC war room meeting is chaired by Muhyiddin in his capacity as Umno deputy president.

However, the letter sighted by Malaysiakini announces that the war room meeting scheduled for Sunday would be chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who is an Umno vice-president.

Umno sources expressed surprise that Muhyiddin has been removed from chairing the GCOC war room meeting despite pledging his continued loyalty to the party after being removed as deputy prime minister.

"How can Ahmad Zahid (photo) as (Umno) vice-president replace Muhyiddin who is still (Umno) deputy president?" one source told Malaysiakini.

Umno sources also revealed to Malaysiakini that Muhyiddin was also removed from chairing the pre-Umno supreme council meeting discussions, which is another key function of an Umno deputy president.

"Normally before the Umno supreme council meeting, there will be a management committee meeting, which is also chaired by the Umno deputy president," said the source.

However, this was changed with the Umno supreme council meeting now being preceded by a "special political bureau meeting" chaired by Najib himself.

'Najib doesn't trust Muhyiddin'

The source said it would appear that Najib (photo) no longer trusts Muhyiddin to carry out his party functions and was therefore actively sidelining him from important duties in Umno.

A separate party source defended the decisions, saying that chairing the two meetings was not the exclusive right of the Umno deputy president.

The source added that the duties can be taken up by other leaders deemed suitable by Umno's top leadership.

"Indeed, Muhyiddin is still deputy president, but he is seen to be refusing to listen to the president.

"At the same time, there are other leaders who are willing to listen to the president," said the source.

Malaysiakini understands that this issue was raised by Muhyiddin at the Umno supreme council meeting last month but he did not receive a clear answer from Najib.

Muhyiddin was removed as deputy prime minister, on July 28, for being critical of Najib's handling of the debt-ridden state fund 1MDB.

Umno vice-president Shafie Apdal, who has been equally critical on the matter, was also removed as a minister.

The two of them have defended their criticism of 1MDB, stating that they were valid questions, and have pledged to remain loyal to Umno despite being jettisoned from the cabinet.

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