

Daily claims Zahid didn't tell Muhyiddin to quit Umno but...

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Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi did not tell Umno deputy president Muhyiddin Yassin to leave the party if he does not support Umno president Najib Abdul Razak, Berita Harian said.

The Umno-linked daily said this in a correction issued last night on its report regarding Zahid's press conference published on its website BH Online yesterday afternoon.

"The news report was based on the writer's interpretation on the reply given by Ahmad Zahid in a press conference this afternoon.

"According to Zahid, the priority is to focus on strengthening the party and supporting the leadership," it said.

Ahmad Zahid at the press conference was asked on Muhyiddin's claim that former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad had wanted Muhyiddin, and not Najib Abdul Razak, to replace fifth prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

This was after the 2008 general election, Muhyiddin claimed, but Najib ended up succeeding Abdullah as he was deputy Umno president while Muhyiddin was only vice-president at the time.

Ahmad Zahid responded by saying Muhyiddin should not be nostalgic and face reality.

He also said anyone who questions the president's leadership should join another organisation and let the people decide who is better in the general election.

Below is the relevant excerpt of the transcript, translated from Bahasa Malaysia, and the original voice recording:

Reporter: Muhyiddin in Johor Bahru yesterday said he was Mahathir's first choice as prime minister but he remained loyal to Najib as deputy prime minister. We want to know what was the actual situation at the time.

Ahmad Zahid: I feel that in politics, reality (hakikat) is the main element to determine one's position.

I respect what he said and I respect his feelings, but I feel that we need to face reality, that is we need not be nostalgic over something that had taken place, but never became reality.

What we need to interpret is that at the time, it was something that we saw as supporting the organisation which we were in. This is what we need to respect and not give differing views.

We need to support the current leadership because this has been determined by the rakyat in the last general election.

If any individual feels that someone should not be at the leadership position, that individual should offer himself to another organisation and prove to the rakyat that he is better than our current leader.

It is better to wait for the next general election so all can step into the ring and see who the rakyat chooses.

Reporter: Muhyiddin's statement makes it seem like Mahathir's choice of prime minister should be prioritised.

If that's the case, Mahathir should be prime minister. Is he the one who should determine who becomes prime minister? Shouldn't this be determined through party structures?

I think this is the most I will say.

Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Minister Hamzah Zainuddin: I want to tell you that it was YAB Tun (Mahathir) who appointed Pak Lah (Abdullah) as prime minister.

He appointed Pak Lah. He did not appoint Muhyiddin at the time, so how can Muhyiddin say he was chosen when Pak Lah was the one.

And then Pak Lah appointed someone else as deputy prime minister. We can't stir up old stories.

For the time being, we accept the reality that Datuk Najib is the prime minister and YAB Datuk Zahid is deputy prime minister.

This is the reality. The rakyat needs to know.

I understand that it is difficult for the deputy prime minister to answer given his position.

But the rakyat needs to understand the structures in our country.

The important thing is that the prime minister has the power, the prerogative to appoint his deputy.

No outsider can determine who becomes the deputy prime minister or who becomes the prime minister.

Only the rakyat can determine who becomes prime minister, and the prime minister himself determines who becomes his deputy.

This is the reality we need to accept. This is what has been happening since we gained independence, until today.

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