

'I have known Najib since 1977, never seen him so afraid'

MalaysiaKini.com

Dec 3rd, 2015

A veteran newsman recalls never seeing Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak this afraid over the past almost four decades he has known him on a personal basis.

On the same note, former News Straits Times group editor-in-chief Kadir Jasin said he never witnessed former deputy premier Muhyiddin Yassin being this feared as well.

"The reality is, Najib has never been brave or stern.

"He rose (up the political hierarchy) because he was skilled at playing it safe and due to being guided as well as protected by his mentors," he said in a blog posting.

Kadir cited former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad as one of Najib's mentors, the same person who is now adamant that he should be ousted as prime minister.

As for Muhyiddin, Kadir said he did not possess a prominent or stern character, and often played "second fiddle" in numerous issues.

Therefore, the veteran newsman found it astounding that Najib and the entire Umno leadership are so fearful of the former deputy premier.

"I think even Muhyiddin himself cannot comprehend why there is suddenly so much of fear towards him," he said in the blog posting.

Kadir was responding to Muhyiddin's claim that he would not be allowed to deliver a winding-up speech at next week's Umno annual general assembly.

After being barred from officiating at the Youth, Wanita and Puteri meets, the Umno deputy president lamented that the latest decision would reduce him to a "tree stump" on the stage.

Meanwhile, Kadir said Umno's democracy, traditions and conventions are being destroyed because Najib and his adherents lacked confidence in the support of delegates and members.

"Those who are big in numbers and have power over the propaganda machinery fear facing a deputy president with no (government) posts or access to party machinery," he added.

According to Kadir, these developments are not because Muhyiddin is strong, but rather due to the prime minister being weak.

"Both of them are not great political chess players. Like the majority in Umno now, they have no charisma or killer instinct

"They are not in the category of political grandmasters such as the late Harun Idris, Mohammad Ghazalie Shafie, Syed Jaafar Albar, Mahathir, Anwar Ibrahim and Sanusi Junid.

"Under normal circumstances, Najib and Muhyiddin are similar in strength or weakness. But in the current situation, Najib appears to be the weaker one," he said.

Therefore, Kadir said Najib needed the protection of the Umno leadership and government machinery to face Muhyiddin.

The veteran newsman said the fear stemmed from the fact that Muhyiddin is armed with legitimate questions on matters "concealed" from or "lied" about to party members.

"The bottom line is that Najib and his people are afraid of being embarrassed.

"What they fear most is that Muhyiddin and Najib's critics will get a resounding applause or a protest will be held outside the hall with '1MDB' and 'RM2.6 billion' banners," he added.

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Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/322082>