

Ex-DPM: Zeti's successor must not legitimize wrongdoings

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Hafiz Yatim and Jimadie Shah Othman

INTERVIEW | Muhyiddin Yassin wants the person who replaces Zeti Akthar Aziz as Bank Negara governor to possess similar or more sterling credentials.

In an exclusive interview with Malaysiakini, the former deputy prime minister said her successor should not be someone who would legitimatise wrongdoings.

"I am told that Zeti is not going to extend her tenure. Who her replacement is I do not know but The Wall Street Journal reported that it could be Irwan (Serigar Abdullah).

"I understand many are not satisfied as what is important is that her replacement should be, if not better, at the same level with Zeti in terms of credibility.

"I was informed that Bank Negara itself has its own candidate from within but now I hear it may not be that person," he said.

Irwan (photo) is currently the Treasury secretary-general and also sits on the 1MDB board of advisers, headed by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

Muhyiddin stressed that the central bank is the most important institution to control the system and regulate finances in the country and the person appointed to be governor should possess impeccable credentials.

He said the person should not be involved with 1MDB, which has been the subject of numerous allegations, which the firm however claims are politically motivated.

"I heard the person (to be appointed) has links to 1MDB. I do not want to accuse the person as being wrong but this creates suspicion.

"A banking system or Bank Negara should promote trust, confidence and credibility. Can this be done?" he asked.

"There are those who assume the person to be appointed is one way of 'legitimising any wrongdoing'. If there is such a perception, it will affect the credibility of our banking system.

"Hence, I hope the government will appoint those who are qualified and possess the right credibility to replace Zeti," he added.

Speculation has been rife that Zeti would retire next month, after becoming the first woman to helm the central bank in 2000.

Apart from Irwan, others speculated as potential candidates are United States ambassador and former Bank Negara assistant governor Awang Adek Hussin and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Abdul Wahid Omar.

Previously, DAP lawmaker Ong Kian Ming also raised concern over Irwan's possible appointment. The latter, however, has claimed to be in the dark.

Meanwhile, financial media Bloomberg added more names to the list of possible replacements which were Bank Negara deputy governors Muhammad Ibrahim, Nor Shamsiah Mohd Yunus and Sukhdave Singh.

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