

Rais recalls how Mahathir flip-flopped on backing Muhyiddin as PM - report

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Six months after the Sheraton Move, Bersatu senator Rais Yatim revealed how Dr Mahathir Mohamad flip-flopped on a major decision to back Muhyiddin Yassin as prime minister in just 24 hours.

He claimed that Mahathir, who was appointed as interim prime minister after resigning from the post on Feb 24, told him and business tycoon Syed Mokhtar Al Bukhary, four days later, that he supported Muhyiddin as the next prime minister.

Rais said he lost his mind when he found out Pakatan Harapan supported Mahathir as prime minister on Feb 29.

"He (Mahathir) told me and Syed Mokhtar that he only secured 66 statutory declarations (SDs) from the parliamentarians... the fact which was submitted to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

"If this is so, he said, then let Muhyiddin become prime minister right away," Rais was quoted as saying by *Mingguan Malaysia*.

After their Feb 28 meeting at Yayasan Al Bukhary, which is owned by Syed Mokhtar, he said Mahathir was reported as saying that he wanted to become prime minister again.

"I lost my logical way to interact, I was at a loss of what to do. This was the evidence that Mahathir could change his stance on something as important as this. At first, he agreed to let go of the premiership to Muhyiddin, then he changed his position," Rais said.

He added: "At first he agreed, then said 'no'. I could not understand the thought process of the former prime minister after Feb 28.

"Probably, on the night of Feb 28, he was 'parented' by his main allies in Pakatan Harapan, so he changed his stance on Feb 29. It was also possible that such a thought process caused Anwar Ibrahim to lose the position he craved for," he said.

The daily also attempted to contact Mahathir for his comment.

The political coup took place after 11 PKR lawmakers led by then party deputy president Azmin Ali met BN, PAS, Bersatu, and Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) at Sheraton Hotel on Feb 23.

Mahathir resigned the next day but he was appointed as the interim prime minister.

On Feb 29, Pakatan Harapan said it backed Mahathir as prime minister. However, on the same day, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong appointed Muhyiddin as prime minister.

Rais also questioned if Mahathir could convince the Slim constituents to support his newly-formed party Pejuang, a Malay-based independent party that is contesting in the Slim state seat by-election.

"At an election campaign a few days ago, Mahathir stated his party was against money politics and he wanted the Malays to support his party.

"It is difficult to believe in Pejuang. First of all, how many years could Mahathir be helming the party? Could Mukhriz distinguish himself in performance given his track record in (helming) Kedah (state government)?

"Is it that, anti-money politics, that (is all you have) to enter the 15th general election?" questioned Rais, who is also a Bersatu supreme council member.

"Money and politics are like water with mud. to get clear water, it must be distilled or processed first.

"Muhyiddin and his allies are already into the process. If this is the only mission, Mahathir himself has failed this mission during his first stint as the fourth prime minister for 22 years and his comeback as seventh prime minister for 22 months.

"To be honest, for whatever reasons, he should help the Muhyiddin government and not the other way around if he really loves the nation and religion," Rais added.

The Slim by-election was called following the death of its incumbent Mohd Khusairi Abdul Talib on July 15. Polling is set to take place on Aug 29.

The by-election will be the first battlefield for Mahathir and his loyalists to test the strength of his new party, which is yet to be registered.

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