



Mustaffa: The Muhyiddin I knew then and now
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EXCLUSIVE PKR deputy presidency aspirant Mustaffa Kamil Ayub said his former boss Muhyiddin Yassin is a different man now, compared to the one he knew during the mid-1990s.

This could be because the deputy premier is now monitoring the possibility of going for the number one post.

Mustaffa (*right*), who is also the Perak PKR chief, feels his former boss has become racially-centric compared to Premier Najib Abdul Razak.

In an exclusive interview with *Malaysiakini*, the PKR vice-president said Muhyiddin was once Anwar's trusted confidante and was among the first to visit the PKR *de facto* leader after he was sacked from the cabinet in 1998.

"There are some changes in Muhyiddin as he has begun to *mengintai* (watch discreetly) the country's number one seat. Hence, his character has moved towards that.

"This was totally different compared to 10 years ago, when Muhyiddin felt his position (as minister and Umno leader) was much under threat as he was viewed as Anwar's man.

"Muhyiddin's image then was that he was leagues apart from Dr Mahathir Mohamad's mainstream politics," he said.

Mustaffa said Muhyiddin, now that he is in a much stronger position politically, is projecting a different image at present, within the Umno context.

Mustaffa, who was Muhyiddin's political secretary in the Youth and Sports Ministry, however acknowledged that his former boss is a serious man and admitted the deputy premier had problem smiling.

It's something Muhyiddin himself had acknowledged several times, notably after winning the deputy presidency in the last Umno elections.

Part of Wawasan team

The former Johor menteri besar was also known to be part of the Wawasan team when Anwar was going for the Umno deputy presidency.

Muhyiddin, along with Najib and then Selangor menteri besar Muhammad Taib, were the winning vice-presidents, as part of that team.

Mustaffa said Muhyiddin's strict upbringing resulted in him being a serious person as his late father was a disciplinarian, having to raise 40 children.



However he added that his former boss is known to be friendly and well-mannered.

"When Anwar was sacked he was the first to arrive at Anwar's residence. Muhyiddin also did not prevent me from visiting Anwar after he was sacked, when I was his political secretary. When I resigned as Muhyiddin's political secretary, he gave his blessings," said Mustaffa who joined PKR in April 1999.

Mustaffa, who had announced his candidacy for the deputy presidency post in PKR, acknowledged Muhyiddin is now seen as being close with Perkasa, which may be well against Najib's '1Malaysia' motto.

"Muhyiddin is always touching on Malay sentiments as if the rights of Malays are being challenged.

"He may be feeling that the Malays should be made fearful of Pakatan Rakyat, which has been successful in itself in bringing the races together by working together."

Mustaffa, who possesses a degree in genetic science and a master's in political science, said that is why Muhyiddin continues to play on the fears of the Malays with regard to the Indians and Chinese.

Dangerous political gamble

However, the PKR vice-president does not share the sentiments and actions of his former boss, saying this is a dangerous political gamble played by the Umno deputy president.

"Muhyiddin probably feels that as long as the Malays can be manipulated to fear other races, they would turn to Umno who stand as protectors of the Malay and Islamic agenda.

"The reality is the Malays cannot be cheated, as the racial card cannot be used any more in Malaysian politics to ensure Umno's survival.

"I criticise my former boss in using racial sentiments. Even the feeling of those staying in the Felda and Felcra schemes, which were once Umno's stronghold, had also changed," he said.

Mustaffa said what is being portrayed at present by the mainstream media and Muhyiddin is just play-acting.

He said the fact is that Umno is giving land in Sabah to build a casino. They also gave away the prime land in Tanjung Pagar, Singapore, belonging to KTM Bhd, in exchange for another piece of land.

"This is selling the country away. Umno is the one who is swindling and violating the Malay rights and the interests of Malaysians. At the same time they are playing the racial card to gather support. This is a dangerous approach and we in PKR strongly reject such tactics," he said.

Mustaffa said that is why PKR is trying to bring in a healthy political culture.

"PKR will not be trapped in racial politics. We feel the need for justice and equality for all. If

there are poor Malays, Chinese, Indians, or Kadazan Dusun or Ibans, we should help them regardless of race," he said.

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