

**Muhyiddin coy on Umno contest**  
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**Chan Kok Leong**

As flattered as he was when told that former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad had named him as a good candidate for the Umno presidency, Muhyiddin Yassin kept his cards close to his chest without a hint of his intentions come party polls this December. MCPX

At the sidelines of a seminar on Malaysian Government Financial Assistance for Malaysian Companies in Kuala Lumpur this evening, the international trade and industry minister was prodded repeatedly on this issue.

muhyiddin yasinBut Muhyiddin kept his cool and replied: "That is very flattering. But that is his (Dr Mahathir) view and I don't want to comment very much. Everyone is entitled to their own views".

"Being a former leader, he has his own assessment of the situation and normally we all respect his view, not that I agree or disagree," he said.

Pressed further on whether he would vie for the party's top post, the Umno vice president said: "I'm of course contesting but which position I'm not going to tell you now."

Muhyiddin also took the opportunity to refute Mahathir's claim that the current cabinet was made up of "yes men".

"No! Even during Tun's (Mahathir) time, we were accused of being yes men. And now he says that we are yes men in Pak Lah's (Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) cabinet.

"Sometimes we say yes sometimes we say no in issues of concern to the nation. When we speak up, we speak inside and not outside.

"We speak with open minds in the cabinet. This also happened during Mahathir's time. But this perception of being a yes man is not correct because we've expressed our stand many times," he said.

**Najib to head task force**

On whether Umno had failed to listen to the grassroots when they picked candidates, he admitted there were some problems.

"The recent elections have revealed several shortcomings in our selection," he said. But that did not mean that the leadership had totally ignored the grassroots' sentiments, he added.

He said certain quarters have exploited the perception that the government did not listen to the people.

"While there were problems relating to the delivery system of our projects, it does not mean that we don't listen," he explained.

ijok election day turmoil 280407 najib pcTo help correct this situation, he said, Umno

deputy president Najib Abdul Razak will be heading a task force to go to the ground.

"Starting with the states we lost, Najib will be going back to the grassroots to explain and restore confidence in Umno."

The task force is schedule to begin with Kedah and Penang on April 10. After that, it will go to Perak, Selangor and Kuala Lumpur on April 14.

"We will also announce aids for states we are not leading. As long as there are BN representatives there, we need to show that our representatives can still deliver through channels we will put up," said Muhyiddin.

During that time the floor will be opened to everyone to voice out their opinions, he added. "There will be no restrictions on what the grassroots can say."

### **Slight drop in GDP**

Moving to economic issues, Muhyiddin was asked how a forecast of US downtrend would affect Malaysia.

He said that they were looking at 0.5 percent drop in Malaysia's 2008 GDP growth.

A Reuters poll of 12 economists predicted GDP to grow at 5.8 percent, opposed to last December's prediction of 5.9 percent.

Bank Negara cut its forecast of 6-6.5 percent to 5-6 percent for 2008 last Wednesday.

"We expect trade to fall a bit if US undergoes a downtrend. The ministry is preparing a paper to cushion the impact," said Muhyiddin.

"One way is to diversify our market and shift some of our trade to growing markets in the region like Vietnam, China, South Korea and Japan."

The ministry is also discussing with associations and industry leaders on how they can adjust to the situation, he added.

He said the ministry is also monitoring how the situation in US goes. "If the situation stabilises by the second quarter, things should start to pick up for us towards the end of the year."

He also denied that any special stimulus will be introduced to help the Malaysian economy.

"So far the incentives we have in place are sufficient. The industries themselves have not requested for more assistance," he said.