

Muhyiddin wants PM to quit earlier
Malaysiakini.com
Sep 10, 2008

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi should transfer power to his deputy Najib Abdul Razak before the agreed 2010 deadline, International Trade and Industry Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said today.

Muhyiddin yassin malaysian service development council pc 090908 04He said 2010 was too far away, and recent political setbacks by the ruling coalition should prompt Abdullah to rethink his timetable.

The Umno vice-president said an earlier leadership transition would give the Barisan Nasional ruling coalition time to prepare for the next general election.

Under a succession pact made recently, Abdullah had agreed to hand over the presidency of Umno as well as the premiership of the country to Najib in 2010.

"I'm being very frank and open because I have no qualms about saying what I think is correct: 2010 is too long," Muhyiddin was quoted as saying by AFP at the sidelines of a Forbes conference held in Singapore.

Tie-up between Muhyiddin and Ku Li?

Muhyiddin said that Abdullah and BN leaders should reconsider the timetable as there might not be enough time for the new leader to address the issues which have led to an erosion of support for the ruling coalition.

"Because of the shift in the support that we have been getting from many sections of the voters... there are some who say maybe the PM might have to rethink whether the dateline is tenable," Muhyiddin said.

The 61-year former chief minister of Johor had just a day ago raised eyebrows by revealing that he was among a group that had met with and invited former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad to re-join Umno, the most powerful party in the Barisan coalition.

A close ally, Sanusi Junid also told Malaysiakini yesterday that Mahathir would back his former rival Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah for the Umno presidency.

The latest developments further fuelled speculation the Kelantan-based Razaleigh, who is also the Gua Musang MP, might team up with Muhyiddin to challenge Abdullah and his deputy for the top two party posts.

Umno elections are due to be held in December.

Situation still fluid

But some observers believed the situation in the party remained fluid.

A Najib-Muhyiddin team is still very much on the cards, which was the original intention of

many top Umno leaders disenchanted with Abdullah after the coalition's poor showing at the March general elections.

Mahathir, who wields substantial influence in the Malay-based party, had resigned in May after falling out with Abdullah, his chosen successor who took over in 2004.

He is not known to be particularly friendly with the 71-year old Razaleigh, who had challenged him for the No 1 post in Umno in 1987.

Razaleigh, who lost to Mahathir, left to form his own party Semangat 46, a move that badly divided the Umno.

He however returned to Umno seven years later, bringing along his supporters after disbanding the S46.

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