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Why is Muhyiddin Dr M's choice?

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PM-IN-WAITING: Muhyiddin will follow Dr Mahathir's dictates, unlike Anwar and Hadi



KUALA LUMPUR

It came as no surprise that former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, 91, had proposed former deputy prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin as the opposition's prime minister-in-waiting at a forum in London on Sept 27.

All this while, that job had been reserved by Pakatan Harapan leaders for Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, even though Anwar is in jail serving a five-year sentence for sodomy.

Dr Mahathir must have had some compelling reasons for naming Muhyiddin as the opposition's prime minister without even consulting his new-found friends, especially PKR and DAP leaders.

They were taken aback by his naming of Muhyiddin and protested that Anwar remained their candidate in the event they won the next general election.

They pointed out that Anwar was their candidate in the 2008 and 2013 general elections, and that Dr Mahathir had no business to vary that setup.

They also said nothing had materially changed for Muhyiddin to replace Anwar. They privately accused Dr Mahathir of trying to dominate Pakatan Harapan and set its agenda, and decided unilaterally on a key plank — Anwar as prime minister-in-waiting.

While Pas did not accept Anwar as prime minister and had proposed its own president, Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang, for the job, such disagreements were put on the back burner until after the general election to not confuse voters.

But with Dr Mahathir presumptuously stepping into the fray and nominating Muhyiddin as the opposition's prime min-

ister, questions are being raised as to why he could not accept Anwar and why he had proposed Muhyiddin instead.

Dr Mahathir is a political animal par excellence and he could read the tea leaves, so to say, way ahead of others. One compelling reason for proposing Muhyiddin must be because Muhyiddin will follow his dictates.

Dr Mahathir sees Muhyiddin as best suited for the job because as president of Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM), Muhyiddin will have to follow his chairman's every wish, and his chairman is none other than Dr Mahathir.

Anwar and Hadi are unlikely to follow Dr Mahathir's dictates. The two are independent presidents of political parties and will not bend to his wishes as readily as Muhyiddin would.

"He can't expect the same level of obedience from Anwar or Hadi as he would from Muhyiddin. Anwar controls a diverse party from a prison cell while Hadi is president of the second biggest Malay party after Umno," said a political analyst.

"These are ambitious men — Anwar and Hadi — and they are not used to taking orders from the likes of Dr Mahathir," he said, adding that it was natural for Dr Mahathir to propose Muhyiddin as prime minister.

Dr Mahathir had announced at the London forum that the opposition's prime minister would not have a free hand.

He had said the chairman of PPBM (himself) must be consulted on policies to ensure that the prime minister did not act unilaterally.

He claimed that the cabinet had insufficient safeguards against this as ministers were beholden to the prime minister.

"The future prime minister will not have a free hand because in the new party (PPBM), we have not only the president but also a chairman," he was quoted as saying.

Dr Mahathir has worked out everything — from becoming PPBM chairman to appointing Muhyiddin as a stop-gap prime minister, and to eventually promoting his son, Datuk Seri Mukhriz, to take over as prime minister.

That seems to be his game plan all along but only now are parts of it being revealed.



Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang



Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin



Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim

"We are worried where this is leading us to," said a DAP lawmaker referring to the Pakatan Harapan coalition.

"We welcomed Dr Mahathir and others, but are beginning to have second thoughts about it."

One of Dr Mahathir's constant worries is who will carry the burden of his political legacy. With this game plan, it is clear that he is banking on his son to eventually take charge.

"By proposing Muhyiddin as prime minister, he is simply ensuring that Mukhriz will occupy a senior position in the proposed new government. If Muhyiddin gets to be prime min-

ister, then he will nominate Mukhriz as his No. 2," said a political insider.

"Mukhriz would then be in line to inherit power after Muhyiddin and complete the legacy circle. Muhyiddin would be a temporary prime minister, warming the seat for Mukhriz," he said.

Some critics even suggested that Dr Mahathir wanted to "run" the country as the power behind the throne with Muhyiddin as prime minister.

This may well be true because having tasted power, it is difficult to shake off the exhilarating hold it can have.