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Doubts on Muhyiddin as PM?

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HINTS: Dr M tells Malaysiakini ex-DPM can lead PPBM but leading government is another matter

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IT appears that Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin might not be Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's choice for prime minister candidate after all, as revealed in an interview by pro-opposition news portal, Malaysiakini. The news portal narrated in its

report that Dr Mahathir had inconspicuously paused when asked whether Muhyiddin was fit to lead Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) during the interview on Wednesday.

"I think at the moment we support (his leadership in PPBM). He can lead... (pause) the party. Whether he can lead the government is another matter," said Dr Mahathir in a video recording published with the interview.

PPBM has been widely connoted as "Dr Mahathir's party" in which he chairs and calls the shots, despite Muhyiddin's presence as its pro-tem president.

It was only two weeks ago that Dr Mahathir had endorsed Muhyiddin

as the opposition's prime minister candidate, in a speech before a small crowd at the University of London.

The opposition pact Pakatan Harapan, however, poured cold water on Dr Mahathir's pick and remained firm in its support for jailed PKR de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim for the post.

When pressed to reiterate his commitment to support Muhyiddin as the next prime minister, Malaysiakini described Dr Mahathir's hesitance in echoing his previous statement made in London.

"No. I think the choice for prime minister (if the opposition wins), when the parties meet (after winning the election) depends on the



Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

members. I can't say so and so should be prime minister," Malaysiakini quoted Dr Mahathir as saying.

In the interview, Dr Mahathir contended that PPBM could survive without Muhyiddin as it would be members who would chart the party's leadership.

"Muhyiddin is there (as pro tem president) but this doesn't mean he is a permanent president or anything like that. We have (party) elections and it is up to members to determine whether he is fit to continue or not. We are a democratic party."

Dr Mahathir and Muhyiddin's dual leadership in the party was also highlighted, to which the former prime minister suggested that his position in the party was to prevent any "power abuse".

"We don't want to concentrate power in only one person. We find

that if there is abuse of power, the (supreme) council is not capable of curbing the abuse. So it is better to have another body chaired by the chairperson, who will balance the authority of the president."

On his son and PPBM vice-president Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir's proposal to limit the prime-ministership tenure to two terms, Dr Mahathir said the idea was made based on global trend.

"This is the trend all over the world. Some limit it to one term, some limit it to two terms. But what is important is that a prime minister must be given time to think, to understand his work, to formulate policies and implement them.

"In my case, I had 22 years and, therefore, I had plenty of time to do and oversee what has been done. But I think if a person is there for too long, he may abuse his power."