

Second ex-PM to be charged

MACC arrests Muhyiddin over Jana Wibawa programme

PUTRAJAYA: Bersatu president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin is set to become the second former prime minister to be hit with corruption charges when he is taken to court today.

He was arrested by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and will face a number of charges under Section 23 of the MACC Act 2009 and Section 4(l)b of the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act (AMLATFPUAA) 2001.

Muhyiddin, who was arrested at 1pm yesterday and released at about 8pm, remained adamant that he was innocent and would answer all charges against him in court.

The Perikatan Nasional chairman said he had not received a "single sen" in his personal capacity and that any money in his party's accounts was just donations.

At a press conference outside the MACC headquarters here, Muhyiddin said he had been told that he would be slapped with seven charges, both in the KL and Shah Alam courts.

"This is political persecution," he said. "Those in the unity govern-

ment are afraid of Perikatan Nasional."

He claimed that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim knew Perikatan would do well in the upcoming six state elections, and the prosecution was done to cripple Bersatu and Perikatan.

Earlier, Muhyiddin had presented himself at the MACC headquarters at about 11am and was detained to be interviewed to complete the final investigations regarding the Jana Wibawa projects and related issues.

Jana Wibawa was a programme launched during the Covid-19 pandemic to assist bumiputra contractors.

Muhyiddin said he had been questioned about two issues - the Jana Wibawa contracts and an appeal by tycoon Tan Sri Syed Mokhtar Albukhary for the cancellation of tax.

On Jana Wibawa, he said he had merely carried out the Cabinet's decision, which required the Prime Minister's Office to extend project applications for consideration by the Finance Ministry.

"I never met the contractors or influenced the Finance Ministry in



Holding court: Muhyiddin speaking to reporters after giving evidence to MACC at its headquarters in Putrajaya.

any way," Muhyiddin said.

Graft busters have been investigating allegations that contractors had deposited RM300mil into the Bersatu party account in return for projects under the programme.

On Syed Mokhtar, Muhyiddin said Yayasan Al-Bukhary had been granted a tax exemption by the previous Barisan Nasional government, but it was cancelled by DAP's Lim Guan Eng when he became finance minister under the Pakatan Harapan government in 2018.

"When I became prime minister, Tan Sri Syed Mokhtar sent an appeal, and I said I had no objection.

"The appeal was subsequently approved. Now I am accused of misusing power.

"Any contribution from Tan Sri Syed Mokhtar was a political contribution directly to the Bersatu account, not into my account.

"He has made donations to political parties for decades," added Muhyiddin.

Earlier, the Pagoh MP was met by a crowd of supporters, including top party leaders, many of whom had left Parliament House to be there. Media personnel from various agencies began gathering there as early as 7am.

Clad in a black suit and white shirt, Muhyiddin arrived in a Toyota Alphard. It was followed by another car believed to be carrying his lawyers, led by Datuk K. Kumaraendran.

He waved to his supporters as they mobbed him before he was ushered into the MACC building.

Muhyiddin will become the second former prime minister to face corruption charges after Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who was charged in July 2018 with criminal breach of trust, money laundering and abuse of power over the 1Malaysia

Development Bhd scandal.

In July 2020, Najib was found guilty and sentenced to 12 years in jail and fined RM210mil.

On Aug 23 last year, the Federal Court rejected his final appeal and ordered him to serve his sentence.

Muhyiddin is also the third leader of Bersatu to be charged over allegations linked to the Jana Wibawa programme.

Former party information chief Datuk Wan Saiful Wan Jan and Segambut deputy chief Adam Radian Adam Muhammad were charged in court last month.

Bersatu treasurer-general Datuk Seri Mohd Salleh Bajuri was remanded on March 2 but released the next day.