

PETALING JAYA: In a move aimed at quelling internal friction, Bersatu president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin will step down as Perikatan Nasional (PN) chairman on Jan 1.

Bersatu information chief Datuk Tun Faizal Ismail Aziz said the decision follows the drama over the appointment of the new Perlis menteri besar after Bersatu and PAS assemblymen pulled support for former menteri besar Mohd Shukri Ramli of PAS, a shake-up that left the coalition scrambling for stability.

Tun Faizal said the position of PN chairman had previously been offered to PAS.

"From the very beginning, after the 15th general election, Muhyiddin offered the PN chairmanship to PAS but it was declined. The post of

Muhyiddin to step down as PN chairman tomorrow

> Decision made to quell internal friction following appointment of new Perlis MB after five Bersatu, three PAS assemblymen withdrew support for former menteri besar

opposition leader was also first offered to PAS but it was rejected.

"After that Muhyiddin proposed Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainuddin (Bersatu deputy president), which was agreed to by Tan Sri Abdul Hadi Awang (PAS president) and others.

"This clearly shows Muhyiddin's attitude. He is not someone who chases positions. However, in the Perlis issue the situation became disharmonious and made to appear as involving a confrontation between the palace and PAS," he told *theSun*.

Tun Faizal claimed that continuous attacks by PAS against Muhyiddin following the incident were also a contributing factor to the Pagoh MP's decision to step down as leader of the opposition bloc.

"As someone magnanimous, Muhyiddin chose to relinquish the position to make way for PAS and other PN component parties. His intention is to restore harmony in Perlis and at the federal level."

Tun Faizal added that current holders of appointed PN positions do not need to resign.

"There is actually no need for them to resign. When the new chairman comes in he will make fresh appointments. But it is up to those appointed if they choose to step down."

Muhyiddin was reported as having informed Bersatu leaders via WhatsApp on Monday night that he would relinquish his post as PN chairman effective Jan 1. The decision reportedly faced opposition from several Bersatu supreme council members who believe that Muhyiddin, as a co-founder of PN, need not step down.

Several Bersatu leaders aligned with Muhyiddin also announced their resignations yesterday, including Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali, who stepped down as PN secretary-general as well as Selangor PN chairman, and Johor PN chief Datuk Dr Sahrudin Jamal, who resigned as state chairman.

Both leaders cited the fact that

their appointments were made by Muhyiddin as reason for stepping down.

The tensions between Bersatu and PAS are not new, with both parties frequently trading barbs following their failure to reach a consensus on naming a prime ministerial candidate for the upcoming 16th general election.

The menteri besar crisis intensified the rift after Bersatu's Abu Bakar Hamzah, who is also Kuala Perlis assemblyman, was appointed as the new menteri besar following the withdrawal of support for Mohd Shukri by five Bersatu and three PAS assemblymen.

Shukri resigned from his post citing health reasons. PAS subsequently sacked the three assemblymen, and their seats were declared vacant.

The party has also urged Bersatu to take action against its five assemblymen. Following the incident, several PAS leaders had renewed calls for the party to sever ties with Bersatu.

PAS secretary-general Datuk Seri Takiyuddin Hassan said yesterday that the party is ready to lead PN.

He said while PAS would continue to support the current Perlis state government, the party would not be part of the new state exco line-up.

"All existing PAS exco members will resign from their respective positions as a sign of solidarity in tandem with the resignation of the former menteri besar."



Tun Faizal said Muhyiddin chose to relinquish the PN chairmanship to make way for PAS and other PN component parties, and restore harmony in Perlis and at the federal level. - **BERNAMAPIC**