

Target on Muhyiddin's back

The rebellion brewing in Bersatu is aimed at forcing Muhyiddin to hand over the presidency to his deputy, but will the move burn down the whole house?

HE is quite a controversial figure in Parliament and he is leading what appears to be a rebellion against Bersatu president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

Machang MP Wan Ahmad Fayhsal Wan Ahmad Kamal is taking a huge gamble with his political career in trying to bring down Muhyiddin.

The powers of incumbency of a party president are immense, and Wan Ahmad Fayhsal, who has already been slapped with a one-term suspension in his party, could be courting a permanent exit from his party if he carries on this way.

But Wan Ahmad Fayhsal, also known as Waf to his friends, is going for broke.

He is part of a trio of MPs, who include Datuk Wan Saiful Wan Jan (Tasik Gelugor) and Datuk Seri Saifuddin Abdullah (Indera Mahkota), raining down criticism on Muhyiddin.

They think their action will trigger more party leaders, especially the division chiefs, to follow suit.

Their objective is to enable deputy president Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainudin to take over.

"We are channelling what the grassroots leaders feel and say about Muhyiddin," said Wan Ahmad Fayhsal.

Bersatu is in turmoil, embroiled in a power struggle that will potentially decimate the party, which has ambitions to claim the prime ministership.

Wan Saiful was sacked earlier this month and Saifuddin, a former minister, was replaced as the Pahang chairman of Perikatan Nasional.



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Analysis

A few days ago, Kepala Batas division chief Khaliq Mehtab Mohd Ishaq was removed from the supreme council over his support for the statutory declaration campaign urging Muhyiddin to accelerate the leadership transition. The peculiar thing is that Hamzah has been quite invisible amid the turbulence.

Hamzah, who is Opposition Leader, was in Sabah recently calling for the ouster of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Chief Minister Datuk Hajiji Noor, while back home, his gang is asking Muhyiddin to go.

Many in the party thought Muhyiddin and Hamzah had reached a truce after a heart-to-heart, meeting arranged by Muhyiddin's aide Datuk Dr Marzuki Mohamad.

At that meeting, Muhyiddin promised that if he is the prime minister after the next general election, he would make Hamzah "one of the deputy prime ministers".

Hamzah had also made a heartfelt declaration that he is Muhyiddin's "number one supporter" at the party AGM in September.

Has the truce collapsed? Surely the trio, who claim to have the support of more than 100 division chiefs, are not acting without Hamzah's approval?

Is Hamzah the hidden hand?

Those in the know say Wan Ahmad Fayhsal would not be so emboldened without the green light from Hamzah.

Wan Ahmad Fayhsal is devoted to Hamzah; and some joke that he is like a son to Hamzah just as secretary-general Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali is seen as the "anak mas" or favourite of Muhyiddin.

A Bersatu leader from Selangor said if Hamzah is indeed the puppeteer, then he is a good actor because he has been carrying on as though all is well in the party.

Moreover, during a political bureau meeting, Hamzah denied that Wan Saiful was "my boy" and had agreed that serious action must be taken against the latter over allegations made against party leaders at a press conference.

At a recent meeting with his inner circle, Muhyiddin said he is not resigning and that it saddened him, as the founding president, to see the party split this way.

"They are our MPs, what's got into them to do all this? I want to stabilise the party so that it can grow even when I am not there," he had reportedly said.

The impression is that the turmoil was triggered by the anointing of Muhyiddin as Bersatu's prime minister candidate during

last month's party convention.

Actually, the discord started after last year's party election with claims and counter-claims of rigging and lack of transparency.

The dream team that Muhyiddin thought he had put together at the party election has turned nightmarish.

Of late, both factions are accusing one another of being the Trojan horse of Putrajaya.

Former politician turned podcaster Datuk Seri Zaid Ibrahim hit the nail on the head when he said the conflict has gone too far and too deep, and that it is less about issues than about personality clashes.

There is too much distrust and rivalry between the two groups.

The pro-Hamzah group is convinced that Muhyiddin prefers Azmin to succeed him in the party.

Hamzah, on the other hand, has the support of the PAS leadership.

They find him to be more consultative, easier to work with and they credit Hamzah for holding the fort after the 2022 general election.

"Hamzah is very accessible and the White House is open to all; we can go and meet him there anytime," said Waf, referring to Hamzah's political headquarters, which is known as the White House.

A common complaint that PAS leadership have about Muhyiddin is that he is prone to unilateral decisions.

PAS is the biggest party in

Parliament and the leaders want to be consulted on decisions affecting Perikatan.

One of the top Bersatu leaders described the last two weeks of attacks against Muhyiddin as "simply crazy".

The situation in Bersatu has become like an onion where each layer peeled off brings more tears and discomfort all round.

Muhyiddin is in a difficult place because the enemy within is often more dangerous than the one outside.

Apart from the mutiny brewing on the ground, there is now an Interpol red alert for his son-in-law, Datuk Seri Muhammad Adlan Berhan, who disappeared in the midst of being investigated for alleged corruption.

A news daily recently reported that the fugitive son-in-law is somewhere in the Middle East.

A photograph showed him alongside some Middle Eastern dignitaries in the unidentified country and he is alleged to have made visits to Thailand.

It is ironic to see the rival factions clashing over the post of prime minister, which neither will get if the infighting goes on.

Internecine struggles are almost always mutually destructive and whichever group emerges on top will be weaker than before.

Muhyiddin is a key pillar holding up the Bersatu house. There is no telling what will happen if that pillar is brought down.

The views expressed here are entirely the writer's own.