

The new Malay Dilemma is public and private views on top 2 Umno posts
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Many Umno politicians are hypocrites. Publicly, they go before the media saying that the top two positions in Umno should not be contested to prevent the party from being split down the centre.

Privately, it is the reverse. They criticise and ridicule all suggestions for the positions occupied by Datuk Seri Najib Razak and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin to be exempt from challenge at the party elections in October.

This two-faced nature of the Umno politician was sketched by former New Straits Times editor and veteran Umno watcher Datuk Kadir Jasin in a column yesterday.

His observations are shared by many in the party, among them division chiefs and deputy ministers who behind closed doors have been prepared to depart from the official line on no-contests.

They believe that there is much restlessness on the ground, ranging from Barisan Nasional's less than impressive performance in GE13; Najib's election strategy and his 1Malaysia policy; his choice of ministers.

If this unhappiness is not allowed to be expressed through the polls, it could harm the morale of party members as well as, ultimately, undermine Najib's leadership of Umno.

The way these critics see it, Najib's control of the party and legitimacy will be strengthened if he wins a new mandate.

But Kadir noted that there appeared to be reluctance by Umno politicians to indicate willingness to contest positions and this includes current deputy president Muhyiddin.

He said that Muhyiddin played a key role in forcing Abdullah Badawi to resign in 2009 after BN's poor performance in the elections in 2008, a move which led to Najib's elevation as the party president and PM.

"So has Muhyiddin, who showed the door to Abdullah, who won 140 Parliament seats, overlooked the fact that Najib's performance was worse," asked Kadir, referring to BN winning 133 of the 222 parliament seats in GE13.

The Malaysian Insider has learnt that Muhyiddin recently played a round of golf with Najib at the Kuala Lumpur Golf and Country Club, where he indicated that he was not interested in challenging the president's position.

Still, this has not stopped some party warlords and Umno bloggers from trying to push Muhyiddin over the hump of inertia.

Kadir noted that Umno members had to ask themselves some tough but important questions.

These include: which was more important, being civil and not upsetting the applecart or

standing up for what was important for Umno's future?

"They have to be brave and admit who really saved Umno in the general election on May 5 – was it the Umno president or rural voters who were worried on the future of Malays if Pakatan Rakyat won and DAP became the strongest party," said Kadir.

He noted that non-Malays preferred Najib to stay on as PM, while they viewed Muhyiddin with some trepidation, remembering that he said once that he was "Malay first".

Non-Malays, especially the Chinese, did not want a strong Umno leadership or a strong government.

"If the Umno leadership is strong and more Malays return to Umno, it will definitely be more difficult for them to make demands," he wrote.

The general feeling among non-Malays is that if Muhyiddin becomes the Umno president and PM, there will be an explosion of Malay-centric policies and little chance of re-introducing English as a medium of instruction in schools.

Still, non-Malays are watching the run-up to the Umno polls in the only capacity available to them – as interested bystanders.

They have no ability to influence the candidates' list or the outcome of polling. This privilege is owned by the 145,000 Umno members, part of the expanded college of voters for this year's party elections.

Several party insiders told The Malaysian Insider that till now no senior Umno leader has shown his hand. But there is belief that Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein, Datuk Ali Rustam and Datuk Shafie Apdal will contest the three vice-presidents positions.

Even their most fervent supporters do not believe that they have the political gravitas or the network or resources to challenge Najib. – July 7, 2013.

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