

Muhyiddin too valuable to Najib to be cast aside, says veteran newsman
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Despite widespread speculation over his position, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin is too valuable an asset to be sacrificed in the event of a Cabinet reshuffle, said Datuk A. Kadir Jasin.

The former New Straits Times group editor-in-chief wrote in his latest blog posting that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak needed Muhyiddin for two reasons.

"First, Muhyiddin (pic), as the deputy premier and the deputy Umno president, is extremely popular within the party. For this reason, Najib has left much of the party work to Muhyiddin.

"Second, because of Muhyiddin's popularity with Umno members, it's risky for Mohd Najib to let him take charge of the party away from his scrutiny," he said, adding that for this reason, it was unwise to leave Muhyiddin unchecked.

"Najib needs to keep Muhyiddin within his sight, perhaps it was for this reason that he denied rumours that Muhyiddin was going to be replaced in the Cabinet."

When the Terengganu crisis exploded last month, triggered by former Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Said and two state assemblymen announcing their intention to quit Umno, Muhyiddin was the first senior Umno leader to make the trip to the east coast state to resolve the problem.

According to Kadir, although Najib later resolved the crisis, it was not lost on anyone that Muhyiddin had been the first on the scene to get an understanding of the situation.

"Najib may shudder at the thought of not having Muhyiddin in his Cabinet," he wrote, although there was no shortage of candidates waiting to step into Muhyiddin's shoes.

Kadir said before last year's Umno election, Muhyiddin had made it known he would not challenge Najib for the party's presidency.

Muhyiddin said he was tired, which he repeated to Kadir sometime later.

"Muhyiddin did not want to be accused of being unable to work with prime ministers having been instrumental in former premier Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's resignation in 2009."

Kadir dismissed Muhyiddin's excuse that he was tired as flimsy, saying he was only 67 years old and not known to have any health problems.

"The late Tun Ghafar Baba became deputy premier at 61 while former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad stepped down at the age of 78," Kadir said.

He noted that rumours were circulating that Najib was grooming his cousin, Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein to succeed Muhyiddin as deputy prime minister.

"Like Muhyiddin, Hishammuddin also hails from Johor. It is well-known that Johor Umno leaders do not always get along with each other."

Kadir said where Hishammuddin is ultimately posted to in the Cabinet reshuffle will shed some light on the veracity of the rumours.

Hishammuddin is widely speculated to take over the Finance portfolio from Najib, although questions have been raised over his credentials.

"If he gets the Finance portfolio, Hishammuddin will automatically become very powerful. However, no Finance Minister has ever become the premier," Kadir said.

Whatever the outcome, it would be unwise to discount Muhyiddin as under Najib's 1Malaysia, Muhyiddin is the Malay face, he added.

"His 'Malay first' assertion is very popular with the Malays, especially those in Umno." – June 25, 2014.

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