

Vocal Najib supporter promoted to helm communications ministry
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By Eileen Ng

Sabah state assembly speaker Datuk Seri Salleh Said Keruak (pic), well known for his vocal defence of Datuk Seri Najib Razak and the troubled 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), is the new Communications and Multimedia minister.

His appointment fuels speculations that it was "reward" for his strident defence of the prime minister and the debt laden state investment vehicle on his blog, sskeruak.blogspot.com.

The Sabah Umno deputy chief, however shrugged off such talk.

"It's the prerogative of the PM to appoint his Cabinet members," he said in a brief Whatsapp message to The Malaysian Insider.

The Usukan assemblyman is well-known in Sabah, having been the Borneo state's ninth chief minister in the mid-90s while Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was prime minister.

His father, Mohamad Said Keruak, was Sabah's fourth chief minister 20 years earlier and who then went on to become the state's Yang di-Pertua Negeri.

In recent months, he had emerged as one of Najib's strongest defenders.

He had said it was pointless for the premier to answer his critics on problems surrounding troubled 1MDB when they will never be satisfied with any answer.

"Is there any point in the prime minister doing what everyone is asking him to do? That is to explain what is happening in 1MDB? Even when he does, the critics are still going to reject the explanation.

"Is there any point for the prime minister to waste his time entertaining the critics when whatever he says is not going to be accepted because the critics are criticising for the sake of criticising and not for the sake of hearing the truth?" he posted on his blog early last month.

Salleh also pulled no punches against veteran leader Dr Mahathir, frequently criticising the elder statesman for his attacks against Najib and 1MDB.

When Dr Mahathir highlighted 1MDB's RM42 billion debt, Salleh said that larger amounts had been lost during Dr Mahathir's 22 years as prime minister.

"The Forex losses alone came to RM58 billion at today's value, and adding to the RM20 billion Malaysia Airlines disaster, that comes to RM78 billion," he had said.

He had also taken Dr Mahathir to task for pushing for a quick inquiry into 1MDB, adding that it was puzzling why the latter wanted speed over thoroughness.

"Should not thoroughness be more of the essence than speed? Why go for speed at the expense of accuracy? he had asked in another blog posting two months ago.

The prolific blogger even uploaded a blog post today hours before Najib's Cabinet reshuffle announcement, denouncing Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's open criticism against the Putrajaya's handling of 1MDB.

When opening the Cheras Umno divisional meeting two nights ago, Muhyiddin had said many Cabinet members were in the dark over 1MDB and that he had to read The Edge to get information on troubled firm.

"This is not only a very mischievous statement meant to create the wrong impression but it also insinuates that the rest of the Cabinet members are total idiots who do not what is happening.

"What do they discuss at the weekly Cabinet meetings, then, or do the Cabinet members just go to sleep?

"It is clear that Muhyiddin's statement yesterday is a disguised vote of no confidence against the Prime Minister for allegedly keeping the entire country in the dark.

"In that case, the noble and honourable thing for Muhyiddin to do is, just like what Tun Musa Hitam did, to resign to demonstrate that since he no longer has confidence in the Prime Minister then based on principles he can no longer remain in the government," Salleh blogged today.

Muhyiddin was dropped as deputy prime minister today, a move which Najib had described as a "difficult decision" but one he had to make to ensure the Cabinet operated as a collective unit.

Muhyiddin was replaced by Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who is also the Home Minister. – July 28, 2015.

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