

Muhyiddin: How I made Najib the PM
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By FMT Reporters

Ousted DPM says Mahathir asked him to replace Abdullah but he said Najib as deputy should be the one

KUALA LUMPUR: Muhyiddin Yassin has revealed that he was instrumental in Najib Razak becoming prime minister, and that he had declined when asked by Dr Mahathir Mohamad to replace Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Muhyiddin related the background to Najib's assumption of power when speaking at a dialogue in Johor Bahru yesterday. The dialogue was organised by publishing company Karangkrak and its daily newspaper Sinar Harian.

He said he had met Najib and urged him to challenge Abdullah after the Barisan Nasional suffered severe losses in the 2008 general election, losing power in five states.

"The thing with Najib is, he takes a long time to make up his mind," Muhyiddin said, according to Malaysian Insider. "That was when I met Dr Mahathir and he asked me to go for the presidency. But I said no, I can't, I am only party vice president, and Najib is the deputy president, so he should go for it."

Muhyiddin said he was eventually the one who convinced Najib to take up the challenge and become prime minister.

"It was on a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Senai that I told him that he needs to make up his mind quickly and I told him that Dr Mahathir had asked me to take up the challenge instead. That was when Najib said okay, he will do it. He agreed to it on a flight to Johor," said Muhyiddin.

About 400 people, most of them Johor Umno members, attended the dialogue session, held in a hotel in Johor Bahru.

Muhyiddin became deputy prime minister after Najib took power, but was dismissed by Najib in late July after making muted criticisms about a reported RM2.6 billion donation deposited directly into Najib's personal bank account. However, he remains Umno deputy president.

He said he had no regrets about helping Najib become prime minister. "I won't say I regret it. At that time, it was the right thing to do. He was qualified and capable to lead the country," he said.

Dr Mahathir, however, has spoken of his regret at choosing Najib to replace Abdullah and has been at the forefront of a year-long campaign to force out Najib as Umno president and prime minister.

Muhyiddin said he was aware of implications after speaking his mind at the dialogue yesterday. "I know I might face further implications, but it is better for me to tell the truth," he said.

“No one can doubt my loyalty. I have always been loyal to the leadership. In my years as part of the government from 1981, I had never spoken out of line against the leadership,” he added.

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