I left Umno over 1MDB, RM2.6 billion, says Saifuddin
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By Eileen Ng

Putrajaya's way of handling the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal and the RM2.6 billion deposited into the prime minister's personal accounts were the final straw that prompted former deputy minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah's departure from Umno.

Saifuddin also attributed his departure from the Malay ruling party to the lack of will to embark on political change and institutional reform – two causes that he said were close to his heart.

"The way we deal with 1MDB and the RM2.6 billion issue," he said when asked why he had left Umno. However, he did not elaborate further on this.

He said the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition and Umno did not discuss "comprehensively and substantially" on political change and institutional reform.

"That's why I feel I no longer fit in Umno and BN," he told a packed news conference at the PKR headquarters today to announce his membership to the multiracial opposition party.

The former deputy higher education minister's entry into PKR was announced by president Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, while deputy president Mohamed Azmin Ali formally placed a PKR pin on Saifuddin's shirt pocket.

Najib is currently under fire over the RM2.6 billion deposit in his personal accounts from an unknown Middle Eastern donor while his brainchild, state-owned investment firm 1MDB is facing multiple probes concerning alleged financial irregularities.

The embattled prime minister has denied taking the money for personal use while the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) said the money was a political donation.

Despite other parties with multiracial platforms, Saifuddin said today that his heart was inexplicably attracted to PKR.

In addition, he said the opposition pact shared the same objectives and ideals to champion and fight for a better Malaysia.

With this latest move, the former Temerloh MP will quit his CEO post in the Global Movement of Moderates (GMM).

He was appointed to the post by Najib.

"I have contacted my chairman who is currently overseas. When he comes back, I will

meet him to tender my resignation," he said in reference to Tan Sri Razali Ismail.

Dr Wan Azizah said Saifuddin's entry into the party would inject new spirit into PKR and further strenghthen it.

She said the party hoped to harness Saifuddin's talents to work with youths due to his vast experience in civil society work.

"I am confident he can play a strategic role in Pakatan to come up with new ideas for Malaysians," she said.

Saifuddin, 54, who is a former Umno supreme council member, was appointed as deputy minister under Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's administration.

He was one of Umno's more progressive leaders, whose views often put him at odds with his more hardline colleagues.

Despite his popularity with urban Malaysians, he lost his seat at the 2013 general election to PAS's Nasrudin Hassan.

After his loss, he became more active in civil society work, giving talks and attending forums by virtue of his position in GMM and as head of Akademi Belia.

Although Umno gave him a show-cause letter for attending the September 22 roundtable discussion involving opposition parties, Saifuddin had shrugged off the warning, saying there was no harm in attending such an event, especially as a representative of GMM.

His reply to the show-cause letter questioning Umno's actions prompted party secretary-general Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor to call him "crazy". – October 15, 2015.

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