

Move to gag Muhyiddin at Umno meet will backfire, says former minister

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Barring Umno deputy president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin from speaking at the party's general assembly next month would only increase sympathy towards him and increase his popularity with people outside the party a former minister said today.

Former information minister Tan Sri Zainuddin Maidin said people would want to know why Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Najib Razak wanted to gag Muhyiddin and stop the party's tradition of having the deputy president speak at the openings of the Youth, Wanita and Puteri wings.

"Stopping Muhyiddin from giving speeches will surely increase sympathy, popularity and uplift his dignity to a higher degree, not only among Umno members, but among the opposition and the people of different races nationwide," Zainuddin said in a blog posting today.

"The support from hundreds of Umno divisions does not seem to have given the confidence, strength and courage to Najib to face Muhyiddin alone."

Najib announced yesterday after the party's Supreme Council meeting that Umno would stop its tradition of having its deputy president officiate the party's wing assemblies during annual general meeting next month, in order to create a "positive atmosphere".

Instead, the chiefs of the respective wings will officiate the meetings, he said.

The move comes amid discord in the lead ruling Malay party following the sacking of deputy president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and vice-president Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal, both removed from Najib's Cabinet in July after being critical of his handling of his brainchild 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), which is mired in debt.

There had been speculation as to how the party would deal with allowing Muhyiddin, who, following tradition, would have given opening speeches at the wing assemblies.

Zainuddin said the move also showed Najib's diminishing authority as Umno president and would cause people to realise that he was not as strong as he seemed to show.

He said there were also some in Umno who could not believe Najib's reasons that stopping the deputy president from addressing the wings was a decision wanted by the chiefs of the three wings.

"Najib knows that Umno members do not trust his excuses, what more the public; instead it was his own desire (to put a stop to the practice) as he was fearful and nervous about Muhyiddin's speech.

"Umno Youth, Wanita and Puteri chiefs should not remain quiet but must instead confirm Najib's claim that they themselves wanted to break Umno's tradition," he added. – November 25, 2015.

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