

## **Najib successor a separate matter, say opposition members who signed Citizens' Declaration**

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**By Jennifer Gomez**

Opposition members who signed the Citizens' Declaration to remove Datuk Seri Najib Razak from office never agreed to the person who would replace him as prime minister – a subject for another discussion, they say.

PAS lawmaker Datuk Mahfuz Omar said no name was mentioned as to who would succeed Najib in the latest move, spearheaded by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"It was agreed at our meeting with Dr Mahathir that the main focus is to remove Najib as prime minister.

"Who succeeds him is another matter and subject to discussion.

"We have agreed in principle on removing Najib and reforms in the institutions," Mahfuz told The Malaysian Insider when asked to respond to a statement by former Kedah menteri besar Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir that the opposition was ready to accept a new prime minister from Barisan Nasional (BN) to replace Najib.

The Pokok Sena MP, however, said Mukhriz's statement was logical and factual since BN still held the majority of seats in Parliament.

The Citizens' Declaration and its signing by political foes and civil society leaders on Friday has stirred debate on the next course of action and whether institutional reforms will really take place.

Dr Mahathir, blamed for eroding Malaysia's institutions during his 22-year tenure, has not acknowledged his role despite a call by civil society to do so, but some have also said that the immediate priority was for Najib's removal in order for Malaysia to move on.

Senior DAP lawmaker Teresa Kok said it was obvious that Mukhriz was under pressure given that he was still with Umno.

"He has to say this to avoid being sacked," she said.

Mukhriz has not been aligned with Umno's top leadership, having been recently removed as Kedah menteri besar.

He was also present at the press conference on the Citizens' Declaration.

But Kok added that the opposition, such as DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang, as well as prominent human rights activist Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan, had been

consistent in saying that more was needed than merely changing the prime minister.

"But for the time being, in view of the mounting pressure to change the PM, all of us have come onboard to support Tun Dr Mahathir.

"Let's not forget that the Citizens' Declaration also includes bringing institutional reforms," said Kok, who is Seputeh MP.

The paragraph on reforms in the declaration which focused largely on Najib's alleged wrongdoings involving state investor 1Malaysia Development Bhd mentioned "restoring the integrity of institutions that have been undermined, such as the police, Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, Bank Negara Malaysia and the Public Accounts Committee".

Parti Amanah Negara vice-president Datuk Dr Mujahid Yusof Rawa said Mukhriz was off the mark by saying the opposition would agree to the next prime minister coming from BN, as Najib represented a corrupt system and those who protected it.

"(His statement is) inaccurate because there was no detailed discussion.

"Najib represents a corrupt system and those who protect it.

"Our concern is both the removal of Najib and democratic and institutional reforms.

"Do you think Umno BN has the courage to do that?," Mujahid said.

But DAP's Klang MP Charles Santiago, who did not sign the declaration, said that while he agreed Najib must resign, the declaration only made a "passing reference" to reforms and was not clear on demands for an independent elections commission and judiciary, and a free media.

"Will ousting Najib while keeping Umno and the institution intact really solve the rakyat's increasing financial hardship and other pressing problems?

"This declaration, therefore, is a rushed document that did not think through these pertinent issues," he said in a statement today. – March 6, 2016.

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