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By ALIFAH ZAINUDDIN / Pic By MUHD AMIN NAHARUL

PRIME Minister (PM) Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's new Cabinet is expected to take shape soon with political observers expecting key positions in health, finance and home affairs to be filled first.

Muhyiddin will likely shift his focus to appoint a Cabinet team over the next few days after being briefed on the country's position this past week by heads of the civil service.

Universiti Sains Malaysia political analyst Prof Dr Sivamurugan Pandian said Muhyiddin can now put together a governing team after being assured of the firm state of the federal administration.

"I think the PM wanted to make sure that the government is running in an orderly manner to avoid any crisis within the system first.

“With that assured, I think he will now focus on the Cabinet. It has been proven that the civil service can run well on its own, so that gives him time to look at the Cabinet in a proper manner — those he thinks will fit into the roles,” Sivamurugan told *The Malaysian Reserve* yesterday.

Given the country’s fragile economic position and the outbreak of Covid-19, Sivamurugan expected Muhyiddin to make at least three major appointments within the next few days, namely the finance, health and home affairs ministers. “What is pertinent now is to have a few ministries first. His predecessor, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, also did that — he did it gradually.

“At this juncture, I think what is important is health, finance, security (home affairs) and maybe education. These are the areas he can prioritise,” he said.

“I think he should form his Cabinet as soon as possible because this would be the backbone of the new government and himself as the PM.

“With a team in place, he can look at other things. Now, he must look into all the ministries. The sooner the appointment, the better,” he added.

To do this, Sivamurugan said component parties within Perikatan Nasional must make compromises and avoid demands that would jeopardise the quality of government.

Muhyiddin, in his first public address as PM, has pledged to appoint Cabinet members from among those with integrity and capability. He said his government will continue efforts to prevent corruption and abuse of power.



International Islamic University Malaysia’s associate professor of law Dr Khairil Azmin Mokhtar viewed this as an important promise that Muhyiddin must fulfil.

“The people will now expect a clean government. If individuals, whose integrity are being questioned are appointed to the Cabinet, it may undermine the confidence in the PM.

“Therefore, there must be some compromise in Perikatan Nasional. Those who are excluded should not take it personally as it is for the sake of the nation,” Khairil said.

Khairil said while the law does not rule out the appointment of those who face trial in court, he highlighted that Article 48(1)(e) of the Federal Constitution states that those who have been convicted of an offence by a court of law and sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than one year or to a fine of not less than RM2,000 will be disqualified from being a member of the Dewan Rakyat.

“If you are disqualified, your seat in the house shall be vacated. If that happens, you will be barred from contesting for five years unless pardon is granted.

“So, if the PM decides to appoint those who are facing charges in court, it is feared that his Cabinet will not last long,” he said.