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Coup brewing in Kelantan Umno (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - A classic Kelantan Umno political wayang kulit is unfurling as 12 of the 14 division heads seek to replace the party's State office bearers.

On March 16, barely hours after attending a State Umno liaison meeting, the 12 division heads gathered for dinner at the residence of a colleague from southern Kelantan.

Sources revealed that they collectively agreed the office bearers were ineffective.

The office bearers are chairman Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, secretary Datuk Ahmad Rusli Ibrahim, treasurer Datuk Dr Nik Hussain Abdul Rahman, information chief Mohd Noor Deris and executive secretary Mohd Nawawi Yaacob.

The 12 division heads' stand is that as long as the current office bearers held their positions, Kelantan Umno would not be able to make a dent on Pas' grip on the State, which is going into its 12th year.

It was learnt, with the exception of Mustapa, who is Jeli division head, and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah of Gua Musang, all the other 12 division heads and the Kelantan Wanita Umno chief were present at the gathering.

A division head who was present tried to downplay the meeting.

"It was a dinner in which we came separately. Some left earlier than the others. Never at any one time were all 12 of us present," he said on condition of anonymity.

He, however, confirmed that there was a consensus among all the 12 present that the five office bearers needed to be replaced.

Another division head who was present also confirmed the stand but insisted that it was not an attempt to create a coup.

"We are not trying to oust Mustapa or the rest. It is just that we think Mustapa has so much on his plate that he is unable to handle them all effectively, especially in dealing with Kelantan Pas.

"To us, Mustapa is a good man. However, that is not enough to handle Kelantan Pas," he added.

Mustapa is also the Umno national information chief and National Economic Action Council executive director.

Asked who among them were being identified as a potential successor to Mustapa, the division head said some believed that it should be Tengku Razaleigh.

"However, Tengku Razaleigh has repeatedly said that he was not interested.

"Our next option is Ibrahim (Datuk Ibrahim Ali, who is Pasir Mas division head)," he added.

It was learnt that Mustapa is aware of the development and sources close to him said he was not perturbed.

"Why should he? It was not a post he fought for.

"He was entrusted with the task by the party president (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) and he had done his best.

"In fact, the reason why the party president chose him was because of his personal standing. He is considered to be clean, hardworking and trustworthy," said a source.

Apart from the accusations of ineffectiveness, the dissenting leaders were also unhappy they did not get enough financial support for party programmes.

It was learnt that Mustapa had been informed of the stand made by the 12 division heads.

It was further learnt that the disaffection with the Kelantan Umno office bearers started a few months back.

"Some of them went to see Mustapa and gave him a month to change the office bearers.

"However, at that time, they did not include Mustapa among the office bearers they wanted removed. Their disaffection then was only against the secretary, treasurer, information chief and executive secretary.

"However, the one month is up. They felt that Mustapa had not respond to their request and decided that Mustapa should be included in the list," a source revealed.

Another source claimed that he (Mustapa) was in fact in the process of making the changes as requested by the division heads.

"However, Mustapa believed that he must inform party president and his deputy (Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) first."
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