

Seven MB posts vacant after polls?

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The heat of the coming general election is sweeping through Umno as it is expected to mark a major change in the ruling party's leadership.

This, according to observers, will be reflected in the party's line-up for the coming polls, where at least 60 percent are expected to be young leaders.

Observers view the candidates' list as the "sweat and toil" of Umno Youth deputy chief Khairy Jamaluddin, who is also Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's son-in-law.

It is also speculated that several menteri besar will not be contesting in the coming elections, some due to the age factor while others are being moved to parliamentary seats.

According to the grapevine, those who will be dropped are Perak Menteri Besar Tajol Rosli Ghazali, Perlis Menteri Besar Shahidan Kassim and Johor Menteri Besar Abdul Ghani Othman.

As for those expected to be moved to parliamentary seats are Selangor Menteri Besar Dr Mohd Khir Toyo, Pahang Menteri Besar Adnan Yaakob, Kedah Menteri Besar Mahdzir Khalid and Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Mohamad Hassan.

The speculation that Mohd Khir will be moved has been circulating for a long time. The reason for this, is that he has become "too strong in the state" and therefore "difficult to control."

Mahdzir, on the other hand, is seen as a "temporary MB" since he replaced Syed Razak Syed Zain who vacated the post due to health reasons.

Meanwhile, Mohamad, a former corporate figure, is said to "lack the expertise" in leading Umno in Negeri Sembilan.

Because of this, he delegates most of the party work to his brother and state Umno secretary Azman Hassan. This has caused uneasiness among other state Umno leaders.

Young leaders

Another interesting speculation is that the vacant menteri besar posts will be filled up by younger leaders. This is significant since several of the states have large numbers of Umno divisions.

Johor has 26 divisions, Perak (24), Selangor (22), Kedah (15), Pahang (14), Negeri Sembilan (8) and Perlis (3).

The number of divisions is important because this decides the delegates - 13 from each division - who will vote during the Umno elections. The party has postponed its polls until after the general elections.

Based on the divisions, the number of delegates from these states will make up at least two-thirds of the total delegates attending the Umno general assembly.

In view of this, control over the states via the menteri besar post will also determine the hierarchy in the party.

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