

Sultan Terengganu next to snub PM?
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Signs are emerging that the Terengganu royal household is also set to follow the heels of the Raja of Perlis in appointing a menteri besar who is not the Barisan Nasional's choice, paving the way for a possible direct confrontation between the royalty and the federal government. MCPX

This morning all 23 BN state assemblypersons from Terengganu were called up for a meeting with the state's Regency Advisory Council.

sultan mizan 13th king agung 131206 regent coronatedThe council represents Terengganu's 11-year-old regent Tengku Muhammad Ismail, whose father Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin is the present Agong of Malaysia.

The incumbent menteri besar Idris Jusoh - who is also Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's choice to lead the state - was not invited for the meeting.

He was the only one not invited for the meeting scheduled to take place in Putrajaya.

Idris was also believed to be in Putrajaya to meet Abdullah.

In the aftermath of the general election, Idris led BN to a comfortable victory to retain the state by winning 24 of the 32 state seats. PAS won the remaining eight.

He was expected to be sworn in on March 9 but the ceremony was suddenly postponed.

idris jusoh and terengganuAccording to an informed source, Idris had a massive fallout with Sultan Mizan. It is learnt that he has yet to have an audience with the king, who is also the Sultan of Terengganu.

The source said the sultan has been unhappy with Idris for sometime now and is seriously pondering to replace him with someone who can work with the Terengganu palace.

"The meeting involving the state representatives today is for the palace to put forward its candidate, seeking a total support for that candidate from the representatives," said the source.

"The council will also tell the representative as to why the sultan disapproves Idris' candidacy as menteri besar," he added.

Idris' shortcomings

It is learnt that the palace was unhappy with the manner the police and the Idris-led state government had handled the Batu Buruk riot on Sept 8 last year.

"The sultan felt that the matter could have been handled in a better way, especially without any live bullets being fired," added the source.

kuala terengganu pantai batu buruk 100907 chaosOn that day, a ceramah by polls reform group Bersih which was forcibly dispersed by the police turned into a riot with scores injured, including two PAS supporters who were shot by a policeman. The police have since claimed that it was done in self defence.

"Similarly, the palace is also unhappy with the manner the police targeted PAS supporters on polling day in Rusila by firing teargas to disperse them. The palace feels that the state administration had influenced the police to act in such manner," he added.

He further said that the sultan was also unhappy with the "apparent cockiness" shown by Idris during his tenure as menteri besar.

"On several occasions, he acted as though he was the sultan, making decisions unilaterally and without giving consideration to the royal household."

At the meeting today, the regency council is also expected to tap into the apparent unhappiness among the grassroots Umno leaders in the state towards Idris, especially over his choice of candidates for the elections.

Many claimed that BN lost some seats this time around due to boycott from Umno.

Several names are being bandied as a possible replacement for Idris, the more popular ones being Ajil assemblyman Rosol Wahid, Cukai assemblyman Mohamad Awang Tera, Telok Pasu state representative Abdul Rahin Mohd Said and Kijal assemblyperson Ahmad Said.

However, the palace is believed to be leaning towards Ahmad Said, who is also the Kemaman Umno division chief. A daily today called him a firebrand, but sources said that the palace has full confidence in him to lead the state .

Double blow for Pak Lah

It is uncertain as to how Abdullah would look into the role played by the palace in choosing a new menteri besar, especially with the rejection of his apparent choice.

pak lah abdullah ahmad badawi malaysia thinkingIf the Terengganu palace proceeds successfully in naming a new menteri besar, this will come as a second blow from the royalty to Abdullah's administration.

Yesterday the Raja of Perlis, using the state constitution to his favour, named Bintong state representative Md Isa Sabu as the new menteri besar in place of Shahidan Kassim who was chosen by Abdullah to continue to be MB.

It is learnt that Abdullah is standing by his decision to reappoint Shahidan to the post and has sent his deputy Najib Abdul Razak to meet all Perlis BN state representatives to find a solution.

"Whatever happens in Perlis and Terengganu, one thing is certain. A constitutional crisis seems to be looming with the stand taken by the royalty against the expressed wishes of the prime minister," said a constitutional expert.

Latest

The menteri besar conundrum in Terengganu took a different turn later in the day when the meeting with the royal council was called off in the eleventh hour.

A source told Malaysiakini that the meeting was called off on the instruction of the palace.

Following that some 20 BN representatives then had a meeting with Abdullah, ostensibly to express their support for Idris.

However it is learnt that the palace's top choice for the menteri besar post Ahmad Said was not in the party that met with the premier.

Meanwhile constitutional expert Prof Abdul Aziz Bari said that the proactive taken by the Raja of Perlis and Terengganu Sultan would not create a constitutional crisis as "the decision taken by the rulers of Perlis and Terengganu are quite in line with the letter and spirit of the constitution".

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