

**Terengganu MB : palace appoints Ahmad Said, boycott looms**  
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**K Kabilan**

After days of uncertainty, the Terengganu palace has defied the prime minister and announced that Kijal state assemblyperson Ahmad Said, 51, has been appointed the new menteri besar of the state.

He would be replacing the prime minister-backed Idris Jusoh.

The office of the Sultan of Terengganu said that the swearing-in ceremony will take place tomorrow morning at Istana Tamu in Kuala Terengganu. Terengganu is the only state left without a menteri besar after the March 8 polls.

In an immediate reaction, all 22 BN state assemblypersons who backed Jertih state representative and incumbent menteri besar Idris (photo) are believed to be toying with the idea of boycotting the ceremony.

At the same time, Ajil state representative and senior Umno leader Rasol Wahid said that the BN state assemblypersons will also be sending a protest note to the palace on Ahmad's appointment.

In addition, Ahmad has warned by the party to decline the appointment as menteri besar.

Umno secretary-general Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor said that disciplinary action would be taken against Ahmad should he decide to go ahead with the swearing-in.

Tengku Adnan urged Ahmad to put the party before himself.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has issued the appointment letter to Idris but this is being ignored by the sultan.

The protracted delay in the appointment of the menteri besar was seen by many observers as a silent conflict between the Terengganu palace and the prime minister.

Immediately after the general election, Abdullah had supported Idris to continue being the menteri besar. Idris also had the support of 22 of his fellow state assemblypersons, excluding Ahmad.

However, Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin of Terengganu - who is serving as the Agong - was keen on replacing Idris with Ahmad, who is also the Kemaman Umno division chief.

In the elections, BN retained the state comfortably by winning 24 out of 32 state seats. PAS won the rest.

### **The fallout with the sultan**

The sultan was apparently not happy with Idris over the Batu Buruk riot on Sept 8 last year as well as the incident on polling day when the police used strong measures to disperse PAS supporters in Rusila, Marang.

sultan mizan zainal abidin 13th agung king malaysia 121206 3It is also believed that the sultan was also unhappy with the "apparent cockiness" shown by Idris during his tenure as menteri besar. On the ground, Idris also faced pressure from Umno members and leaders over his choice of election candidates.

Sources told Malaysiakini today that the pressure on Idris from state Umno leaders and fellow state representatives were still apparent but they continue to support him for the menteri besar post to toe the party line.

"It is simply because they don't want to be seen as going against prime minister Abdullah's choice," said a source close to the state party leadership.

"Furthermore, Idris is also the state Umno leader. It would not be sending a right signal if the state representatives leave him isolated, especially when the present political climate is so favourable to the opposition," he added.

The source said that the conflict could have been avoided if Abdullah had "given his consent to Ahmad to lead the state".

As it stands, the source fears that the boycott plan by the 22 BN state representatives will draw a wider wedge between the palace and Umno.

"And it is unfortunate that Ahmad is caught in the middle of all this. His role will surely be affected as a result of this," added the source.

The source said that the first task for Ahmad would be to gain the support of the 22 state assemblypersons, who had submitted a memorandum to Abdullah on Friday, seeking for Idris to be retained.

Idris was originally slated to be sworn in on March 10 at Istana Maziah but that ceremony was postponed at the eleventh hour to a date that was to be determined later.

### **It's the sultan's prerogative**

Constitutional law expert Prof Abdul Aziz Bari said that it was important for the state to have the menteri besar sworn in as soon as possible.

"As far as I know, 14 days (to appoint a menteri besar after the general election) is certainly unreasonable. By now the state has set a new record, certainly in Malaysia," he told Malaysiakini.

"Apart from the fact that the government of the day must have a valid popular mandate, the head of state must have a government to advise him.

"Which is why it has been said that the government must be appointed as soon as possible after the results are out," he added.

prof dr abdul aziz bariAbdul Aziz also said that it was the sultan's prerogative to appoint Ahmad to the post.

"Given the law, namely that it is the ruler's judgment and satisfaction, there is nothing Idris

or the prime minister can do about it. Legally the prime minister has got no business here as it is a matter for the sultan to decide," he added.

However, Abdul Aziz said that the sultan must make his position clear by stating why he took the present position.

"It has been claimed that the sultan was unhappy about the Batu Buruk tragedy and the commotion in Marang during the polling day.

"This is indeed a valid reason for the sultan has a duty to protect the constitution and to ensure that process has been conducted in a fair manner.

"He may ask Idris to tell the truth; perhaps for him to declare that he has got nothing to do with those two incidents," he said.

Abdul Aziz also ruled out any possible claims that the sultan had acted beyond his powers in appointing Ahmad.

"I believe he has got all the information pertaining to what has taken place in the state. And, like what has been done by the rulers of Perak, Perlis and Selangor, he has a duty to appoint a government that is stable and has the necessary support," he said.

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