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Perlis ruler, Abdullah to resolve impasse over MB

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PUTRAJAYA: The prime minister will resolve the impasse over the appointment of the menteri besar of Perlis with the Raja of Perlis.

Beseri state assemblyman Mat Rawi Kassim, who called on Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday with eight other Barisan Nasional assemblymen from the state, said the prime minister had indicated this in the meeting.

He said the post of menteri besar was still open at the moment with the candidate yet to be identified.

This is despite the fact that the Raja of Perlis announced the appointment of Bintong assemblyman Datuk Dr Md Isa Sabu as menteri besar on Friday.

The impasse is because former menteri besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim was given a letter of mandate by Abdullah to continue in the post and he is protesting Md Isa's appointment, with the prime minister standing by his choice.

The eight who came to Seri Perdana with Mat Rawi, included Md Isa. They are supporting his appointment as menteri besar by the Raja of Perlis.

Said Mat Rawi: "As far as I know, it has not been decided who will be the menteri besar. It is now up to

the prime minister and the Raja of Perlis.

"The prime minister said he would settle it with the palace as soon as possible and asked us to return to our work as elected representatives."

Mat Rawi said the people in constituencies represented by the assemblymen who met Abdullah from 4.50pm to 6.10pm "wanted change". He said the nine of them had been summoned by Abdullah, who advised them against being distracted by the tussle over the MB's post.

The others in the group were Yip Sun Onn (Titi Tinggi), Sabry Ahmad (Santan), Dr Por Choo Chor (Indera Kayangan), Abdul Jamil Saad (Sena), Ahmad Bakri Ali (Kayang), Mat Hassan (Kuala Perlis) and Datuk Seri Syed Radzlan Putra Jamalullail (Pauh).

The group also had the support of Pas assemblyman for Simpang Empat, Rus'sele Eizan.

Those backing Shahidan, who won the Tambun Tulang seat in the March 8 general election, are Abdullah Hassan (Sanglang), Khairi Hassan (Mata Ayer), Mansor Jusoh (Chuping) and Jafperi Othman (Guar Sanji).

Shahidan, who completed his third term as menteri besar before the general election, also met Abdullah on Friday after news broke

out that the Raja of Perlis wanted Md Isa as menteri besar.

He waited outside Seri Perdana, the prime minister's official residence, for several hours in the afternoon until he got an appointment.

He emerged later that night expressing happiness that Abdullah had not changed his mind.

Shahidan said that the letter of mandate from the prime minister had requested the Raja of Perlis to appoint him (Shahidan) to lead the state.

Shahidan, 57, became Perlis menteri besar after the 1995 general election and was retained after the 1999 and 2004 elections.

He obtained a doctorate in political science from Universiti Utara Malaysia a year ago.

Md Isa, 61, is a four-term state assemblyman for Bintong. He was Kangar member of parliament from 1995 to 1999.

In the recent general election, he got 4,882 votes to beat Pas' Mohd Anuar Mohd Tahir, who received 2,772 votes.

Md Isa has a PhD, master's in business administration and diploma in total quality management from New Port University, United States.

Between 1984 and 1986, Isa was the senior private secretary to the then deputy home affairs minister,

Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad.

Meanwhile, Syed Radzlan, the ruler's younger brother, said a clear majority of the assemblymen were behind Md Isa.

He said Md Isa's appointment was done according to state law.

"To say that Tuanku appointed his own man is wrong.

"There were nine of us (assemblymen) who agreed to Md Isa being menteri besar."

The Pauh assemblyman said Md Isa has the experience for the job besides being a mature politician.

Khairi is hoping for an early end to the matter.

"We are waiting for a decision, positive or negative. I hope the problem will be settled soon.

"I agreed with the other group, but when the prime minister issued the *watikan* (appointment letter) and I saw the letter with my own eyes, I had to abide by the BN decision."

State Pas commissioner Hashim Jasin said Rus'sele had submitted a letter to the ruler supporting Md Isa.

"Despite being an opposition party, we stand firmly behind the decision of the Raja of Perlis.

"If he picks Md Isa, then we support his decision as it was in accordance with the state constitution," said Hashim, the former Sanglang Assemblyman.