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PRIME NEWS

Temperamental transition times

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COOLING DOWN: Give time to rebuild unity and strength

A MENTERI Besar made a special entrance into national politics yesterday as a tempestuous 48 hours healed in dramatic fashion.

Sworn in on Monday night, Datuk Ahmad Razif Abdul Rahman reported for work in his new capacity at his old office which is that of the state exco's. The door was fitted, for now, with his new designation and the subject of this year's biggest political exertion to date, 'Menteri Besar' (of Terengganu).

This was taking place very early on, from 7.30am, in the presence of state officials and representatives of the national media, on Level Six, 10 floors below the office of the menteri besar at the state administration centre, Wisma Darul Naim in Kuala Terengganu.

Razif was taking charge with decorum and circumspect.

The previous menteri besar, Datuk Seri Ahmad Said, had after all set off a political crisis by penning the concurrent "I resign and I am quitting Umno" note to a news station on Monday. Two days later Ahmad returned to the Umno fold.

In the preceding hours yesterday, people close to Ahmad suggested that there was an urgent need for a cooling-off period given his "temperament".

It also emerged that Razif, who had served as an exco member under Ahmad, was not about to offend the sensibilities of Ahmad by "displacing" his former boss at the office on the 16th floor and at the residence.

Ahmad was holed up at the residence on Tuesday. Ghazali Taib (Ajil) who had also fleetingly left Umno, was with him before leaving at midday. That the Bukit Besi representative did not return to the residence was the clearest indication yet that he was having second thoughts about proceeding with

his by now nationally known and watched political endeavour.

Neither did Ahmad make any attempts to "detain" the assemblyman, amplifying that the former menteri besar was hardly plotting a stunning political machination.

"Datuk is never going to betray Umno," said an aide.

His actions on Monday were supposedly intertwined with his daughter's wedding reception to be held in his bastion on Saturday. That has been an emotive signpost, prompting him to request a two-week delay before relinquishing a post he assumed in 2008 when the menteri besar, Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh,

had to make way. The final wedding event is the do hosted by the bridegroom's family in Kuala Lumpur on May 30.

That Pas was swift in making its public stand unambiguous — fresh polls are preferred over defections — had further stymied further political skirmishes.

How did Pas actually fare this

week? Ahmad revealed that Pas representatives did approach him during his stint outside Umno.

The *New Straits Times* sought the views of two long-serving members of the Umno supreme council on whether Umno and Pas were not in such confrontational mood given the less hostile setting with regard to hudud.

"It is too early to speculate...after stabilising things we will have to strengthen unity in Terengganu Umno and rebuild our strength," said Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed.

Had this hyper-volatility spell not evaporated, ramifications in terms of mood might have been felt nationwide.

Pas and PKR, which began the week on 15 seats in the 32-seat assembly, did not improve on their tally. Ominously, however, the Umno-BN tally dipped at a point from 17 to 14.

"The initial reaction was certainly not out of the ordinary," said Datuk Din Adam, who had after being excluded from the BN line-up in the May 5, 2013 general election, gone on to win the influential post



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Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Ahmad Razif Abdul Rahman was sworn in on Monday

of Ketua Bahagian at Dungun Umno. That Umno-BN had won just one of the four state seats in Dungun plus the parliamentary seat was pounced upon by critics of Ahmad as an indictment of sorts against his tenure as state party chief and menteri besar.

As everyone weighs in with their analysis into this week's affair, the same prognosis shall reverberate.

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