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'We'll support Najib's choice'

NST- 23/1/2016

30-MINUTE MEETING:
Najib has vowed to look into the issue, says state Umno deputy chief

KUALA LUMPUR

KEDAH Umno leaders who met Umno president Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who is also prime minister, yesterday made it clear that they want Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir replaced.

Kedah Umno liaison committee deputy chairman Datuk Seri Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah said the message was conveyed during a meeting with Najib, who is also party president, with several Kedah Umno leaders, behind the closed doors of Tun Hussein Onn Hall at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here.

"I have said I will support anyone Najib chooses. We will accept," he told the *New Straits Times* last night.

Bashah said Najib had responded by saying that he needed time to scrutinise the issue.

"We explained to Najib the scenario and asked for his help to do something about it. He acknowledged the explanation and asked for time to deal with it. He has promised to look into the issue."

Bashah said the decision to have Mukhriz replaced was made collectively by "Kedah Umno division chiefs, wings' chiefs, assemblymen and members of parliament".

It was learnt that leaders who were



present during Wednesday's press conference in Alor Star were here to meet Najib.

After the 30-minute meeting that began at 4.50pm ended, those present were tight-lipped about what had transpired.

PWTC security guards, who were tasked with preventing the media from entering the hall, created several exits for party leaders to keep newsmen away from them.

Even photographers were told not to take pictures of the leaders. One of the leaders' bodyguard was seen telling a photographer to delete pictures that had been taken.

Bashah arrived at 4.30pm, with Jeral Umno chief Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom and Kubang Pasu Umno chief Datuk Mohd Johari Baharom.

About 5.20pm, members of the media were told that Najib had left the hall. Several Kedah leaders left through separate exits, with many of them heading for Seri Pacific Hotel near the PWTC.

Party leaders who were still at PWTC at 7.30pm included Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor and party executive secretary Datuk Ab Rauf Yusoh.



Kedah Umno liaison committee deputy chairman **Datuk Seri Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah** (right), Padang Terap Umno chief **Datuk Mahdzir Khalid** (centre) and former Padang Terap member of parliament **Datuk Ghazali Ibrahim** arriving at the Putra World Trade Centre to attend a meeting with party president **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** yesterday. Pic by Abdullah Yusof

A source told the NST that Najib had told the leaders that he needed time to resolve the issue.

"He wants to look at the issue from various angles. He is not going to make any decision soon. I can't reveal details, but the meeting was serious. Najib did not say much, he only listened to their (Kedah leaders') views most of the time. There was nothing to laugh about."

It was learnt that Najib had said he did not wish to see Kedah slip away

from Umno and Barisan Nasional (BN), and vowed to help the state.

"The party president said BN's win in the last general election was based on team effort, not individuals. BN was successful (in the state) due to the development channelled by the Federal Government, assisted by the Kedah civil servants as well as strategies arranged.

"Najib said if they want to retain the state, Kedah Umno has to move forward as a strong and collective

IN THE 'NEW SUNDAY TIMES' TOMORROW

Nasharudin Mat Isa, who took over the helm of the Global Movement of Moderates Federation (GMM) three months ago, was on a trip to Jakarta when militants attacked the Sarinah mall. He witnessed the aftermath of the attacks from his nearby hotel. The former Pas No. 2 tells the 'New Sunday Times' why the global community needs to work harder to battle extremism and why Malaysia is in prime position to spread the message of moderation. Read the exclusive interview tomorrow.



team, which he believes is still true."

In **Subang**, Selangor, Mukhriz's arrival at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport about 5pm was greeted by supporters and newsmen.

The Kedah Umno liaison committee chairman declined to comment on whether disciplinary action would be taken against the division heads who were against him.

"I have no comment on that (action against the division heads)."

When asked if disciplinary action could be taken against him, he said, "I don't think I have done anything wrong."

Page 1 pic: Umno president **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** (left) having a discussion with Kedah Umno liaison committee deputy chairman **Datuk Seri Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah** (centre) and Baling Umno chief **Datuk Abdul Azeez Rahim** (second from right) at Putra World Trade Centre yesterday. Pic by Asyraf Hamzah