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Najib has audience with king

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SOLUTION: Kedah issue expected to be resolved soon

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THE Kedah menteri besar crisis is expected to be resolved by the end of this week, as opposing factions in the state Umno continue to slug it out to determine Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir's po-

sition of power.

Yesterday, about 8am, Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Najib Razak arrived at Istana Negara for an audience with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, further fuelling speculation on the possibility of Mukhriz being removed as menteri besar. There were reports that Najib had sat with the Kedah ruler on mat-

ters relating to a pre-cabinet meeting and left the palace about 30 minutes later.

Nevertheless, there was no cabinet meeting yesterday, according to Putrajaya insiders.

Sources close to the administration and Umno's top echelon have been claiming that the crisis would end with the nomination of Kedah Umno liaison committee deputy chairman and Bakar Bata assemblyman Datuk Seri Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah as the new menteri besar.

They also said Friday's Umno supreme council would be a platform to resolve the issue and a new



solution for "the greater good of Umno" would be meted out.

On Tuesday, the Kedah Regency Council requested for Bashah's

dossier for a review.

Meanwhile, his aide said a "watakah", or a letter of appointment, from the Kedah palace to install a new menteri besar would be issued to Bashah "soon".

A senator at the Dewan Rakyat, Bashah, who is also deputy domestic trade, cooperatives and consumerism minister, is expected to resign from his federal post in a few days' time.

"Do not be surprised if my boss tenders his resignation as deputy minister soon, if he receives the

→ *Continued below*

"watakah," said the aide.

Mukhriz came under fire after the majority of Kedah Umno leaders and its elected representatives gathered to declare that they had lost trust and confidence in his leadership last Wednesday.

They also called on Najib to make an immediate change to the state's top leadership.

A source said Bashah's camp had gathered 19 Kedah state assemblymen to form a majority against Mukhriz, out of 36 lawmakers in the house. The assemblymen included two from MCA, Gurun's Datuk Dr Leong Yong Kong and Kulim's Chua Thiong Ghee.

However, it has yet to be ascertained whether the rest of the assemblymen were from Barisan Nasional. Save for Mukhriz and his loyalist, Jitra assemblyman Datuk Aminuddin Omar, Bashah's camp now has the edge of a simple majority to push for a vote of no confidence, if the claims are true.

However, analysts in general have debunked the possibility of

Mukhriz's ouster being carried out during the next state assembly.

National Council of Professors' political observer Professor Datuk Dr Zainal Kling said while not all assemblymen were in favour of keeping Mukhriz as the state's top executive, he was sceptical of the idea that a motion of no confidence would be raised in the assembly.

"I don't think that they will go through a vote of no confidence. What will happen is Najib will meet Tuanku Abdul Halim or the Kedah Regency Council to resolve it in whatever way they see fit."

Bashah was said to be present yesterday in Parliament during the second day of the tabling of motion on Malaysia's participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement. He could not be contacted for confirmation on whether he had receive the "watakah".

Meanwhile, on Tuesday night, Mukhriz denied that he had problems administering the state. Additional reporting by Hana Naz Harun and Predeep Nambiar



Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** leaving Istana Negara after an audience with **Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah** yesterday. Pic by Yazit Razali