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Najib to meet council chairman

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AUDIENCE WITH TUNKU SALLEHUDDIN: New menteri besar may be appointed today

**AUDREY DERMAWAN
AND MASRIWANIE MUHAMADING**

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is expected to hold an audience with Kedah Regency Council chairman Tan Sri Tunku Sallehuddin Sultan Badlishah at Istana Darul Aman in Bukit Persekutuan here today to discuss the state's menteri besar crisis.

It is learnt that Kedah State Secretary Datuk Bakar Din will also be present.

A source said the meeting is expected to be held at 8.30am.

Earlier, Principal Private Secretary of the Sultan of Kedah, Datuk Paduka Syed Unan

Mashri Syed Abdullah, said the prime minister will most probably meet Tunku Sallehuddin today or tomorrow.

On Wednesday, Najib was seen entering Istana Negara in Kuala Lumpur for an audience with Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, which many speculated was related to the position of Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir as menteri besar.

A source close to the Umno top leadership said the group that initiated a revolt against Mukhriz had gained support from the majority of Kedah Barisan Nasional assemblymen by

asking them to sign statutory declarations (SD).

"If everything goes according to plan, the letter of appointment of a new menteri besar will be issued immediately, right after the audience with the Kedah Regency Council chairman," the source said.

The one touted to replace Mukhriz is Datuk Seri Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah, who led the protest against the former's leadership. Bashah is also Bakar Bata assemblyman and Alor Star Umno division chief since 1995.

Former Kuala Kedah Umno division chief Datuk Latt Shariman Abdullah said Mukhriz's "silo" mentality was to be blamed for the crisis.

He said Mukhriz should have called up his detractors to clear the air surrounding his management.

"As the state Umno leader, he has every opportunity to call up his deputy and others to work out whatever problems they may have. Unfortunately, he has never done so until today. Why?"

"This is not the first time. It has been many times that he chose to work with a silo mentality. The problem lies with his leadership. There have been far too many complaints," he told the *New Straits Times*.

Latt said Mukhriz should have been a team player to effectively run the state.

"As of now, he is like a general without an army."

Earlier, at Istana Anak Bukit in Kedah yesterday, state assembly Speaker Datuk Md Rozai Safian said he had not received any motion for a vote of no confidence against the menteri besar. He said the assembly sitting in March would proceed as usual.

Mukhriz is scheduled to attend the Umno supreme council meeting at the Putra World Trade Centre today. **Additional reporting by Melissa Darlyne Chow**

