

Kedah exco, PAS say no move to replace Azizan
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 2 — Kedah state government representatives said today they were unaware of plans by PAS to replace Datuk Seri Azizan Abdul Razak as the menteri besar due to concerns over his health.

When contacted this morning, the three PAS state executive councillors touted as possible candidates to replace Azizan sounded surprised when told of the plan reported in The Star today.

Religion, Education and Co-operatives committee chairman Datuk Mohamed Taulan Mat Rasul said he had only heard the news this morning when he was told that there was "some rubbish in the newspapers" regarding the Kedah administration.

"I wouldn't know. I have not met anyone since two days ago because of Hari Raya. Then today, someone told me of some rubbish in the newspapers. Perhaps I should speak to my colleagues about this," he said.

English-language daily The Star published on its front page news of Azizan's possible retirement due to his ailing health, claiming that PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang will also seek audience with the Kedah Sultan soon.

Hadi's aide confirmed with The Malaysian Insider today that the leader will visit Kedah this weekend.

The article quoted Azizan as confirming that some leaders have told him to take a rest because of his health, but also that he has purportedly refused to do so, saying that he has many things to do.

But Mohamed Taulan, who is also the Tokai assemblyman, insisted that everything was "okay" with Azizan's leadership despite the latter's weak health.

"Actually, everything is okay... only he gets tired sometimes and the doctor does not permit too many visitors because it makes him stressed and tired. But of course... people visit him sometimes at 2am or 3am," he said.

Apart from Mohamed Taulan, the article also suggested two others as top of the list to replace Azizan — Anak Bukit assemblyman Datuk Amiruddin Hamzah (Industry and Investments, Agriculture and Agro-Based Industries, Biotechnology, Rural development and Poverty Eradication committee chairman) and Pangkalan Kundor assemblyman Datuk Phahrolrazi Mohd Zawawi (Housing, Local Government, Public Works, Water Supply, Water and Energy resources committee chairman).

Like Mohamed Taulan, Amiruddin also expressed surprised when told of the news today, saying that he was not made aware of such a transition in leadership.

"This is all news to me. But I think, if he (Azizan) says he is well, then he is well. It is for

the person to say it, not for others. So I do not know where they get these news from... you should check with the writer," he said.

He stressed that there was no infighting among PAS's Kedah leaders for the post of menteri besar, saying that "this is not PAS's way of doing things".

"We are all very supportive of Azizan. He has requested we take over some of his duties, especially during the Ramadan month... for visits and such and we have been in full support," he said.

Amiruddin also agreed that news of Azizan's possible removal could be exaggerated or fabricated by those with the intention to break PAS's solidarity in Kedah. There are 16 PAS assemblymen and three PKR assemblymen in Kedah's 36-seat assembly.

Phahrolrazi declined to comment on the issue, pointing out that his name had been listed as one of the possible candidates to replace Azizan.

"Since I seem to be the subject in this issue, it would be best if I refrained from commenting. But yes, of course we are concerned for his health and we are always in support of him," he said.

When contacted, PKR state executive councillors S. Manikumar and Lim Soo Nee expressed the same consternation over the issue as their PAS colleagues.

Manikumar said the matter would likely be handled by the PAS central leadership but noted that it would be better if Azizan recovered from his ailments and continued as menteri besar.

"We must give him time to do this. Otherwise, it is not just about changing him from his position... we have to consider many other issues... the rhythm of the management will be changed, perception changed... things will be very different," he said.

Lim said that Azizan has so far appeared to be more than capable to proceed with his duties, but said he would leave the matter up to the PAS central leadership to decide.

When contacted, PAS vice-president Datuk Mahfuz Omar, who is also a Kedah MP, and Information chief Datuk Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man confirmed that the PAS central leadership had never discussed replacing Azizan as menteri besar.

Two Kedah PAS assemblymen — Abdul Ghani Ahmad (Ayer Hitam) and Dr Hamdan Mohamed Khalid (Tanjong Dawai) — were also surprised when asked to comment on the issue today.

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