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Announcement-MB (News Focus)

ANNOUNCEMENT ENDS SPECULATION OVER OSMAN'S SUCCESSOR

By: Mohamed Fisol Jaafar

ALOR SETAR, June 10 (Bernama) -- All speculation ended following the announcement by the Prime Minister's Department today that Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid will succeed Tan Sri Osman Aroff as the Kedah Menteri Besar.

The choice is not unexpected as it was almost sure that the former Agriculture Minister will replace Osman when he was fielded to contest the Kuah state seat in the general election last year.

The only uncertainty is when it will take place although initial speculation was that the change in the state leadership will be effected soon after the election.

Why did it take so long and why is it that it did not take place during the election fever which is regarded as the "best time" to effect changes? Only Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has the answer.

Speculation was rife that Sanusi will be the new Menteri Besar when Osman announced on April 14 last year the list of Barisan Nasional candidates in the general election, at Seri Mentaloon, the Menteri Besar's official residence, here.

Many came to this conclusion following reports indicating that Dr Mahathir intends to change the leadership in several states.

The issue somewhat lost its intensity after the election but resurfaced in early July to such an extent that Osman had to make a statement to deny that he was resigning.

The statement did not put an end to speculation and in early August Osman once again had to dismiss similar allegations but this time he said that he would only tender his resignation if directed by the Prime Minister.

When the issue reached a height, Dr Mahathir who was on an official visit to Kedah, held a meeting with all Umno state assemblymen from the state at the Umno building here on Aug 11, and the meeting focused on the post of Menteri Besar.

On Sept 6, the Prime Minister again held a meeting of Kedah state assemblymen from Umno at his office in Kuala Lumpur and when met by journalists later, Dr Mahathir merely said that there was no guarantee that a leader will remain in his post forever.

The issue was almost forgotten until March 24 when 22 Kedah state assemblymen from Umno issued a memorandum to express solid support for Osman's leadership and disregard any attempt to replace him as Menteri Besar.

The memorandum was signed by them at a meeting held after a tahlil in Seri Mentaloon on March 21.

The move by the group was said to have displeased the Prime Minister who was reported to have said two days later that it was against the Umno tradition which is to reach a consensus following consultations.

The state assemblymen were summoned by the Prime Minister to express their stand and they were reported to have apologised and left the matter to the Prime Minister to make a wise decision.

On May 6, Dr Mahathir told reporters at Parliament house that Osman had tendered his resignation letter but he (Dr Mahathir) had not decided on the matter.

Two weeks after his return from a working visit abroad, Dr Mahathir said that he had accepted Osman's resignation.

Osman, after a meeting with state assemblymen today, announced his

resignation with effect from Sunday (June 16).

Later, the Prime Minister's Department put to rest all speculation when it issued a statement that Sanusi has been appointed the new Kedah Menteri Besar following Osman's resignation. -- BERNAMA

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