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Umno-MT

WILL DEFEATED BIG NAMES MAKE IT TO SUPREME COUNCIL?

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 11 (Bernama) -- The just-concluded Umno elections have left behind a long list of big-name casualties who failed to make it into the party's Supreme Council (MT).

The MT is usually dominated by ministers, menteri besar or chief ministers, and deputy ministers.

But this time around, five Cabinet ministers -- Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Datuk Syed Hamid Albar, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik and Datuk Annuar Musa -- lost in the polls.

Two menteri besar -- Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib (Perak) and Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad (Negeri Sembilan) -- are also among the losers while Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid did not contest for any post.

The question now arises as to who among them will get appointed to the MT by Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who has limited places to apportion.

The president can appoint 10 ordinary members to the MT, the party's highest policy-making body, to add to the 25 elected by the delegates at the triennial polls.

In addition, he appoints the party's secretary-general, treasurer and information chief.

Rafidah, the high-profile International Trade and Industry Minister, was ousted by Deputy Health Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman as Umno Wanita head at the women wing's polls on Wednesday.

On the same day, Rural Development Minister Annuar and Isa failed in their bid for the Youth head post which was won by Bagan Datoh MP Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Defence Minister Syed Hamid, Youth and Sports Minister Muhyiddin and Ramli lost in yesterday's vice-presidential race, while Sabbaruddin, the Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister and a four-term MT member, failed to get re-elected.

By tradition, menteri besar or chief ministers from Umno are appointed to the MT if they lose in the polls, by virtue of them being the Umno liaison chief in their respective states.

Isa was the only menteri besar who lost in the 1993 party elections when he was defeated by Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik for the post of Umno Youth head and was subsequently appointed to the MT.

Dr Mahathir also appointed two V-P candidates defeated in the 1993 contest, Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Sanusi, to the MT.

The others appointed were Datuk Dr Affifudin Omar, Datuk Dr Kamal Salih, Datuk Osu Haji Sukam, Datuk Ibrahim Ali, Datuk Nazri Aziz, Ahmad Shahibuddin Mohd Nor and Hassan Harun.

If the tradition is maintained, then Isa and Ramli have the best chances of being appointed to the MT along with Sanusi, who became Menteri Besar only four months ago.

Analysts said the position of the defeated Cabinet ministers is unclear especially since this is the first time that such a large number of them failed in the elections.

"It is entirely up to the party president but with a crowded field of defeated ministers, they cannot expect to be automatically appointed," said one analyst.

Meanwhile, the chairman of the Kuala Lumpur Malay Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Datuk Moehamad Izat Emir, today urged Dr Mahathir to appoint

one or two representatives from the corporate sector to the MT.

He said this is necessary because none of the seven prominent corporate figures who contested for MT seats succeeded.

The seven included Tengku Datuk Adnan Mansor, who was the only corporate figure elected into the MT in 1993. The others are Datuk Dr Kamal Salih, Datuk Radzi Manan, Datuk Khalid Ibrahim, Datuk Hanifah Noordin, Datuk Azrat Gull Amirzat Gull and Kamal Hussein.

Izat said: "My chamber regrets that none of them got elected but I think this is due to them not being too actively involved in politics especially at the branch or divisional levels."

But because the MT is the party's highest policy-making body, it is necessary for the corporate sector to be represented so that inputs from the business community could be taken into account in policy decisions by Umno, he said.

Izat also said he felt Malaysian Malay Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Tan Sri Yahya Ahmad, who controls the DRB-Hicom group, is the ideal candidate to sit on the MT from the private sector. -- BERNAMA

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