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ABU HASSAN APPOINTED NEW SELANGOR MENTERI BESAR

KUALA LUMPUR, May 2 (Bernama) -- Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Abu Hassan Omar has been appointed Selangor's new Menteri Besar, ending weeks of speculation over the replacement for Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhamad Taib who resigned last April 14.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim announced the appointment at a noon news conference at his office today.

Earlier, Anwar had a 40-minute audience with the Sultan of Selangor in Shah Alam where he presented the name of the new Menteri Besar.

Anwar said the Sultan had consented to Abu Hassan's appointment.

Abu Hassan, 56, who is Selangor Umno deputy liaison committee chairman resigned from his Cabinet post today, Anwar said.

In order to be Menteri Besar, Abu Hassan will contest in an impending by-election for the Permatang state seat to be vacated by the current assemblyman Jamaluddin Adnan.

Jamaluddin in turn will contest in the impending parliamentary by-election for the Kuala Selangor seat to be vacated by Abu Hassan.

Anwar, who is Umno deputy president, said Abu Hassan and Jamaluddin would vacate their seats today.

"We leave it to the Elections Commission to set the dates for polling in the parliamentary and state assembly constituencies, and hope Abu Hassan will win the election comfortably," he said.

Anwar said the Prime Minister had informed the Selangor State Secretary that the administration of the state be carried out as usual in the absence of a Menteri Besar until Abu Hassan takes over.

He said Dr Mahathir wants the state administration to function smoothly in the interim period without making any major policy changes.

Anwar said the Prime Minister has also agreed that Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamad act as the Minister of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs for the time being.

On Abu Hassan's present duties, Anwar said: "He will now spend his time in the Permatang state and Kuala Selangor parliamentary constituencies."

Asked if Dr Mahathir had informed him of the grounds for Abu Hassan's appointment, Anwar said he was not told anything but felt the minister has the experience and seniority after serving the federal government and Selangor Umno.

As to whether Abu Hassan's appointment meant that other state executive councillors and assemblymen were not considered suitable for the post, Anwar said: "The issue does not arise because we had to choose a state assemblyman from Selangor. So we chose Abu Hassan to contest (for a state assembly seat) based on his experience."

Anwar said he was confident that the Selangor state government would work as a team based on the pledge by state executive councillors and Selangor Umno liaison committee members to fully support whatever decision the Prime Minister made.

"What is important is that Abu Hassan is among the most senior politicians in Selangor, and has been able to handle several political crisis in the state," he said.

Commenting on the Sultan of Selangor's statement that he wants a Menteri Besar who is clean and honest, Anwar said: "There are many who are clean, but we chose Abu Hassan based on his experience and ability to work for the good of the people."

Asked if Abu Hassan's resignation from his minister's post meant there would a Cabinet reshuffle, Anwar said that was a matter to be determined by the Prime Minister. -- BERNAMA

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