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LEAD MB-Hassan

ABU HASSAN IS THE SELANGOR MB-DESIGNATE

KUALA LUMPUR, May 2 (Bernama) -- Datuk Abu Hassan Omar was today named as the Selangor Menteri Besar-designate in a surprising announcement which rarely happened in national political history.

It is surprising because he is not a state assemblyman (ADUN) to enable him to become Menteri Besar and because of this factor, his name was never mentioned in media speculations on the candidate to be chosen for the post.

Deputy Prime Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who made the announcement on the selection of Abu Hassan here said, the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister had resigned his Cabinet post and as the member of parliament for Kuala Selangor.

He said Abu Hassan, 56, will contest the Permatang state assembly seat which was vacated by Datuk Jamaluddin Adnan, in a by-election to be held soon.

Jamaluddin will in turn stand for the Kuala Selangor parliamentary seat vacated by Abbu Hassan.

Abu Hassan is only the second Federal Cabinet minister to relinquish his Cabinet post after being selected to head a state government.

In 1981, Datuk (now Tan Sri) Abdul Taib Mahmud resigned his Cabinet post to contest for a state seat before being appointed Sarawak Chief Minister.

Abu Hassan will succeed Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib who resigned on April 14 following the filing of two charges against him by an Australian court for failing to declare currency to the equivalent of RM2.4 million which he attempted to take out from the Brisbane Airport on December 22.

Anwar who made the announcement at a press conference at the Prime Minister's Department after having an audience with the Sultan of Selangor at the Green Lodge in Shah Alam, said Abu Hassan's candidacy had received the consent of the Sultan.

According to Anwar, the Prime Minister had informed the Selangor State Secretary that the state administration should proceed as usual in the absence of the Menteri Besar until Abu Hassan is appointed to the post after winning the state by-election.

The Sultan of Selangor told reporters after his meeting with Anwar that he was happy that the issue was now over.

He declined to disclose Abu Hassan's name to reporters saying that he believed the new Menteri Besar is a "clean man".

He wanted the Menteri Besar to serve with sincerity and to place the peoples' interest above personal interest.

"But what is most important for the Menteri Besar is not to lie," he said.

Abu Hassan himself expressed gratitude to the Sultan of Selangor and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for placing their trust on him to lead the Selangor government.

He said the trust placed by the leadership on him was a very great honour for him.

"I accept the post as a responsibility which needs to be carried out because Selangor's development was crucial in view of the many major projects which were being implemented," he told Bernama when met at his residence at Taman Tun Abdul Razak in Ampang Jaya, here this afternoon.

Among the projects that are being implemented in Selangor are the

Multimedia Super Corridor and the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang.

He said the first important thing for him now is to ensure his victory in the Permatang by-election.

He asked all component parties of the Barisan Nasional at all levels to mobilise party machinery for the by-election.

The selection of Abu Hassan, who is also Deputy Chairman of the Selangor Umno Liaison Body, was well received by government leaders and the opposition although several Selangor Umno leaders said the selection was rather "unusual" because he is not a state assemblyman and a by-election needs to be held.

They described Abu Hassan, who was also a former Foreign Minister, as a clean leader with vast experience in administration, politics and external relations.

Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang said Abu Hassan's candidacy was something that was "truly surprising" and killed all speculations on the appointment.

Among the names speculated by the media to take over the post of Menteri Besar were Exco and Sungai Ayer Tawar assemblyman Datuk Zainal Dahalan and Kelana Jaya assemblyman, Datuk Mokhtar Dahlan.

Muhammad, the former Selangor Menteri Besar, commenting on Abu Hassan's candidacy said he was not surprised with the selection as it was in line with the wishes of the state Umno leadership which wanted a senior and experienced person to lead the state government.

"I am not surprised with the selection of Abu Hssan because from the very beginning I had informed the Prime Minister that I would accept whoever he chooses as the new Menteri Besar," he said when asked to comment on the candidacy at the Menteri Besar's official residence in Shah Alam.

Muhammad said he would assist in efforts to further develop Selangor.

Muhammad also called on all Exco members and state assmeblymen from Umno and other BN component parties to cooperate with Abu Hassan.

Asked whether he would assist Abu Hassan in the forthcoming by-election, he said he would join the campaign to ensure Abu Hassan's victory. -- BERNAMA

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