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Assembly-Selangor (Residence)

ABU HASSAN EXPLAINS RM5 MILLION RENOVATION

By: Abdul Aziz Harun

SHAH ALAM, Dec 4 (Bernama) -- A crying Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar said if given the choice he will prefer to stay in his own house in Ampang Jaya rather in the house which had been renovated at a cost of RM5 million in Shah Alam.

"I come from a poor family and I do not yearn to stay in the official residence of the Selangor Menteri Besar with my family," he said as tears ran down his cheeks in the state assembly today.

He said the question of the official residence for the Selangor Menteri Besar was a never a priority matter to him since being appointed the state's Chief Executive in June this year.

Abu Hassan said following Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib's resignation as Menteri Besar, he was appointed to succeed him but only after one-and-a-half months and he had to clear a lot of accumulated administrative work on taking over.

"When I was offered the post by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, I did not care whether I will stay in the official residence of the Menteri Besar or elsewhere," he said when winding up the debate on the state budget for next year.

Abu Hassan said he had proposed that the official residence of the Menteri Besar be turned into a government guest house and he was more than willing to commute between his Shah Alam office and Ampang Jaya or find some other house in Shah Alam,

"At the meeting all members of the House and also heads of department were asked for their views and they all agreed unanimously. The house is not under the name of Datuk Abu Hassan but under that of the Selangor Menteri Besar."

"The economic situation at that time was good, I reported this matter to the Prime Minister but did not have the opportunity to so to Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. He was busy and I too was busy. I think the Prime Minister conveyed the matter to his Deputy."

He said since being appointed Menteri Besar on June 6, he only visited the official residence two times as his duties warranted his presence there.

Abu Hassan said in this renovation matter, the government did not commit any irregularities and was prepared to be investigated by the Auditor-General or the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) at any time.

"We have nothing to hide in this matter, we are open, accountable and ready to be probed," he said.

Abu Hassan said the percentage of expenditure on the renovation was fair as no renovation had been done on the house over the last 24 years.

It accounted only 2.5 per cent of the RM169 million allocated for development and operating expenditure under the heading of Menteri Besar and State Secretary.

" With this, I acknowledge and take full responsibility over the renovation works for the residence of the Selangor Menteri Besar," he added.

Meanwhile an architect said the house had to serve not only the present Menteri Besar but future generation of Menteris Besar and no renovation would be required for another 20 years.

He also pointed out that the official residence of the British Prime Minister at No 10 Downing Street, London, had been renovated over and over

again to last several generations of Prime Ministers. It is in the long term interest of the country.

Short-sighted people should take into account the long term interest of the state and its assets, the architect said. -- BERNAMA

AZH AAM