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Abu Hassan breaks down (HL)

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SHAH ALAM, Thurs. - Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar today broke down in tears as he told the State Assembly the RM5 million renovation to his official residence had been discussed and approved by the State Exco and department heads.

"My family and I are not excited about moving into the official residence. I come from a poor family...", he said, overcome with emotion and tears. "... There is no need..."

He stopped and there was pin-drop silence until he continued speaking in a strained voice, saying that the State Government had nothing to worry as there was no corruption involved (in the renovation).

"I approved the RM5 million after getting the green light from the State Executive Councillors and heads of department during a weekly State Exco meeting (in July)," he said.

Abu Hassan, who was sworn in as Menteri Besar on June 6, said the matter was discussed in depth as it involved a big sum.

He said when the Public Works Department informed him the renovation works would cost between RM4.5 and RM5 million, he felt it was too high but had to agree when they provided a detailed breakdown. The issue was front-paged by the Utusan Malaysia yesterday.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, when asked to comment on the report yesterday, had said Abu Hassan had told him he did not move into the official residence soon after his appointment as Menteri Besar as "the whole thing was a shambles".

Abu Hassan took over from Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib as Menteri Besar.

Abu Hassan in addressing the State Assembly at 2.30pm said: "The State Government has nothing to hide and worry. There is no corruption or swindle. The Auditor-General and Anti-Corruption Agency can come and do whatever investigation they want."

He said the State Government was open, transparent and accountable and thus there was nothing to hide or to be frightened of.

Abu Hassan said the issue was highlighted on the front page of many newspapers, but it should not be politicised by the Opposition to gain mileage as the Barisan Nasional knew what it was doing.

He said he would inform the Prime Minister, his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and the Sultan of Selangor of the matter soon.

He said when he was sworn in as the Menteri Besar, he did not move into the house as he was informed renovation needed to be carried out by the PWD. "There were plans for renovations even during Muhammad's tenure.

"When PWD officials told me that it would cost about RM5 million to renovate the house, I took the matter up with the Exco before giving the approval," he said, adding that the approval and allocation was made for the official residence of the State's Menteri Besar and not Datuk Abu Hassan Omar. He also stressed he had informed Dr Mahathir of the intended renovation works but did not get a chance to tell Anwar. "I will move into the official residence only after getting the clearance from Dr Mahathir."

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