

29 MAY 1997

Abu Hassan-MB

ABU HASSAN CLEARS LAST HURDLE TO BE SELANGOR MB

KUALA LUMPUR, May 29 (Bernama) -- Datuk Abu Hassan Omar tonight won the Permatang state by-election, clearing the last hurdle to become the sixth Menteri Besar of Selangor.

The former Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister gave up his Kuala Selangor parliamentary seat to be elected to the Selangor State Legislative Assembly.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also Umno President, sprang a surprise when he named Abu Hassan as the choice for Selangor Menteri Besar to succeed Tan Sri Muhammad Taib who resigned on April 14.

Muhammad, who also relinquished his post as Selangor and Kuala Lumpur Federal Territory Umno Liaison chief, did so to avoid dragging Umno into his personal affairs where he is facing a court case in Brisbane, Australia.

He is facing a charge of failing to declare the equivalent of RM2.4 million while about to depart for New Zealand at the Brisbane International Airport on Dec 22.

In the by-election, Abu Hassan beat Pas' candidate Mohd Maskuri Mardzuki with a 7,780-vote majority.

He polled 9,590 votes against 1,810 votes by his opponent.

Dr Mahathir's choice of Abu Hassan as successor to Muhammad surprised political observers who had expected the post to go to the most senior member of the Selangor State Executive Council.

Abu Hassan, 56, is expected to be sworn in as Permatang assemblyman tomorrow while no date has yet been fixed for him to take his oath of office as the new Selangor Menteri Besar. -- BERNAMA

RAZ ABG