

Several newspapers report on the appointment of the new Menteri Besar of Selangor to replace Tan Sri Muhammad Muhd. Taib who resigned on April 14.

NEW STRAITS TIMES, SUN, UTUSAN MALAYSIA and HARIAN WATAN say the new Menteri Besar is expected to be announced today.

The Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is scheduled to meet the Sultan of Selangor at 10am today to get his consent on the appointment of the new Menteri Besar.

Presenting the name to the Sultan is usually done by the Prime Minister but Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad left yesterday for official visits to African countries.

Among the hopefuls are Executive Council member and Sungai Air Tawar Assemblyman Datuk Zaianal Dahalan, Executive Council member and Dusun Tua Assemblyman Datuk Dr Zainal Abidin Ahmad, former Executive Council member and Paya Jaras Assemblyman Datuk Saidin Tamby and former Deputy Menteri Besar and Batu Tiga Assemblyman Datuk Abu Sujak Mahmud.

One newspaper reports that State assemblyman for Sungai Ayer Tawar Datuk Zainal Dahalan is expected to be sworn in on Saturday as Selangor Menteri Besar.

The paper quotes sources close to the Selangor leadership confirmed that the routine security vetting and background check on Zainal have been completed.

Zainal was interviewed and his house visited by relevant officials to check on his lifestyle.

A Selangor state assemblyman, who wished to remain anonymous, said the state Umno liaison committee has also unanimously endorsed Zainal for the post.

Zainal, a former administrative and diplomatic service officer, was the district officer in Sabah Bernam before becoming an assemblyman in 1982.

Several "newcomers" have also been speculated as the likely successor. They include Kelana Jaya Assemblyman Datuk Mokhtar Ahmad Dahlan, Hulu Klang Assemblyman Datuk Fuad Hassan and Pandan Assemblyman Mad Aris Mad Yusof.

Observers recalled that when the Prime Minister appointed Muhammad as Menteri Besar in 1986, he was only a two-term Assemblyman.

Appointing a newcomer, therefore, would not surprise many, observers said.

More than 130,000 posts in the civil service, mostly in the professional and technical fields are still vacant, Director-General of Civil Service Department, Datuk Mazlan Ahmad said.

BERITA HARIAN says the country's civil service has 1.07 million posts in various categories and only 870,000 were filled.

The vacant posts are mostly doctors, engineers, architects and pilots.

STAR highlights that the Penilaian Tahap Satu (PTS), or Standard Three Assessment Test, introduced last year to select top scorers for express class has been made tougher.

This is despite calls by parents and groups to scrap the examination.

This year, the pupils will have to sit for a school-based Achievement Test comprising subjective and oral tests in the languages, apart from the centralised Aptitude Test, to qualify for double promotion.

The Malays must prepare themselves for the emergence of a meritocratic society as the country marches towards Vision 2020, Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said.

Newspapers report that Zahid said even as the concept of the Malaysian race began to take shape, a society which could afford economic and educational opportunities based solely on merit and achievement would be formed.

He said the Malays must be prepared to face the advent of a meritocratic system by the year 2020 to ensure they do not lag behind other races.

They should grab opportunities to pursue tertiary education, strive for excellence and not take for granted the privileges enjoyed by them now.

Zahid points out that the quota system for economic and education sectors will have to be reviewed to provide equal opportunities to all Malaysians by the year 2020.

This is necessary to ensure a meritocratic society and a pre-requisite for the creation of Bangsa Malaysia envisaged under the Vision 2020.

Another widely reported item is the setting up of a computer crime unit by the police.

The setting up of the unit, in keeping with the rapid growth of information technology, is being looked into to ensure it could adequately deal with computer crimes in terms of law enforcement and prosecution.

Deputy Home Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob said the police are looking for computer experts and graduates to join the force.

The Malaysian media has to play its role in correcting the inaccurate reports carried by Singapore's The Straits Times on the happenings in this country.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the local media could also teach the media in Singapore on adopting the right attitude to maintain friendly and neighbourly relationship.

Johor will get several major medical projects under the Seventh Malaysian Plan, with over RM169 million set aside to upgrade health and medical facilities in the State.

Airod Sdn Bhd has been awarded a multi-million ringgit Programmed Depot Maintenance contract to service up to 36 US Air Force C-130 Hercules transport aircraft based in the Pacific, over the next six years.

BUSINESS TIMES reports trade among the Asean-7, already the fastest growing intra-subregional trade in Asia and the Pacific, is likely to accelerate faster when Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos are admitted as members this year.

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