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Dr M hopes new Malacca CM will use his power `sincerely and wisely'

Ahmad A. Talib; Rashid Yusof in London

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in advising new Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Abu Zahar Isnin to carry out his duties well, reminded the latter that the job was powerful.

"I hope he uses his power well, sincerely and wisely," he told a Press conference yesterday. "Do not abuse the power given by the people."

Since the Malacca Government was also a Barisan Nasional Government, Dr Mahathir said it was very important that Abu Zahar maintained close co-operation with the Federal Government.

"We find that some States, even though they are led by the Barisan Nasional, sometimes take a somewhat different stand from the Federal Government," he said.

Asked to elaborate, Dr Mahathir said there were some differences between some States and the Federal Government on Islamic laws while there was also the tendency to repossess land for other purposes.

"We try to do things that we think is good for the people, but State Governments sometimes only see the advantage given to them.

"We hope we can co-ordinate. The State Governments need to ensure that their policies are in line with Federal ones."

In Malacca, Hamidah Atan reports that Merlimau Assemblyman Datuk Abu Zahar Isnin took his oath as Malacca's eighth Chief Minister at Istana Melaka in Ayer Keroh.

In the simple swearing-in ceremony attended by State Executive Councillors, high-ranking government officers and dignitaries, Abu Zahar received his appointment letter from the Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Syed Ahmad Shahabudin at 4.05pm.

He later took the oaths of office and secrecy.

Among those present were Syed Ahmad's wife, Toh Puan Marfuza Sheikh Mohd Osman; Abu Zahar's wife, Datin Khalijah Mohd Jiddi; State Umno liaison deputy chief Datuk Wira Mohd Ali Rustam, also deputy Transport Minister, and Malacca High Court Judge Datuk Suriyadi Halim Omar.

In his maiden speech delivered during the ceremony, Abu Zahar said his appointment was not a "bonus" to his political career but a mandate that would be carried out with full commitment and dedication.

Speaking to reporters later, Abu Zahar said he would meet Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim tomorrow to discuss the State's administration.

He declined comment on a reshuffle in the State Exco. On development plans for Malacca, he said the State Government would develop the State based on the national development policy.

"We will draw up a more effective and viable action plan and strategies towards the achievement of Vision 2020. I am confident that Malacca, being a small State, can achieve the status of a developed State way before 2020."

The State Government will be more careful when approving development projects because of the scarcity of land.

Green areas like water catchment areas, forest reserves and coastal areas would continue to be maintained and beautified, he pledged.

Reiterating that his main emphasis would be creating a better understanding on Islam to overcome social ills, he said efforts to produce more middle-class Bumiputera entrepreneurs would also be enhanced.

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