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Malacca Exco to see some changes (HL)

Tengku Sariffuddin

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Abu Zahar Isnin, sworn into office yesterday, has been directed to drop "one or two" State executive councillors.

Abu Zahar said the changes to the Exco line-up would be made by Tuesday. He said this after meeting acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim here today.

Abu Zahar said there were certain reasons for dropping the Exco members but declined to elaborate. He also refused to say whether or not those to be dropped were being investigated by the Anti-Corruption Agency.

He said it was impossible to retain the current line-up although he had wanted to do so.

"I had tried to defend (the existing exco line-up) but it was not possible," he said. "I have to follow the directive of the leadership as I was appointed by the leadership."

Parliamentary Secretary in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Azmi Khalid had said in April that eight State Exco members from six States, including three from Malacca, were being investigated by the ACA for alleged corrupt practices involving millions of ringgit.

Excluding Abu Zahar who is the Works and Public Utilities Committee chairman, Malacca's other Exco members are:

* Datuk Yasin Mohd Sarif (Housing, Local Government and Environment Committee chairman);

* Datuk Wira Gan Boon Leong (Health and Manpower);

* Datuk Sahar Arpan (Science, Technology and Industry);

* Datuk Mo'min Abdul Aziz (Education and Religious Development);

* Datuk Poh Ah Tiam (Culture and Tourism);

* Datuk Ibrahim Durum (Youth, Sports and Family Development), and;

* Datuk Noordin Yaani (Agriculture and Rural Development).

The late Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Zin Abdul Ghani had chaired the Land, Economy and State Planning Committee.

In fact, Mohd Zin, before he died of a stroke on May 14, had intended to reshuffle the State Exco in June.

Abu Zahar said he had discussed with Anwar potential Exco candidates.

Abu Zahar said Anwar also gave a directive to exercise caution in approving land acquisition, particularly those for commercial ventures, to ensure consistency with recent amendments to the National Land Code.

"If possible there should be a joint-venture effort (involving the landowner) in development," he said.

Abu Zahar, who automatically assumed the State Umno liaison committee chairmanship after becoming Chief Minister, said Anwar, as acting Umno president, wanted the party machinery together with other Barisan Nasional component parties to prepare for the Melekek State seat by-election.

He said a big victory would consolidate the coalition's position in the State.

"Anwar wants Umno Malacca to remain united as it is essential to maintain our position," he said.

On Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement from London that some State Governments took a somewhat different stand from the Federal Government, Abu Zahar gave the assurance that Malacca's policies and development would be in line with the direction set by the Federal Government. "I will follow the directives and guidelines based on Federal

aspirations," he said, " so that we do not go off track."
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