

02/05/1997

Selangor MB to be named today? (HL)

Ramlan Said; Sa'odah Elias

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The new Selangor Menteri Besar to replace Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib who resigned on April 14 is expected to be announced tomorrow.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is scheduled to meet the Sultan of Selangor at 10am tomorrow at the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Golf Club in Shah Alam.

Anwar is expected to present the name of the new Menteri Besar for the Ruler's consent. The meeting was earlier scheduled at 6pm today but was postponed.

Presenting the name to the Sultan is usually done by the Prime Minister but Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad left this morning for a three-nation tour of Africa.

Dr Mahathir's remarks yesterday to the Press after a dialogue with participants of the National Congress on Vision 2020 hinted at the possibility of Anwar making the announcement on the Prime Minister's behalf.

When asked by reporters whether he had decided on the new Menteri Besar, pointing to Anwar who was seated beside him, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't know. From tomorrow, you have to ask him ... he will be in charge."

Dr Mahathir had already met the Sultan on April 21. No announcement was made at the end of the meeting at Istana Selangor, but Dr Mahathir told the Sultan that he needed "a bit more time" to name the replacement.

The Sultan then said that he wanted a candidate who is honest, clean and one who would work for the people and not his own interest.

Before meeting the Sultan, the Prime Minister had already met Selangor Executive Councillors where he also informed them that he needed more time before announcing the name of the new Menteri Besar. The State Executive Council gave Dr Mahathir the full mandate to seek a suitable replacement.

Dr Mahathir had also met the Selangor Umno liaison committee. During that meeting, the committee declared that it would support whoever is chosen to head the State Government.

Muhammad, who was Menteri Besar since 1986, also vacated his positions as Selangor and Federal Territory Umno liaison committee chairman and Barisan Nasional Selangor and Federal Territory chairman.

Muhammad, the State Assemblyman for Batang Kali, is facing two charges at the Brisbane magistrate's court for failing to declare the equivalent of RM2.4 million while leaving Brisbane International Airport for New Zealand last Dec 22 and for making a false declaration.

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

Zainal Dahalan, who holds the portfolio of Rural Development, Bumiputera Economic Development, Agriculture and Fishery Committee chairman, is the most senior Executive Council member in Selangor.

A former State Assembly Speaker, he first came into prominence when he was elected as State Assemblyman for Sungai Air Tawar in the 1982 general election at the age of 34, a seat he held until today.

The father of six is married to Datin Kasma Aini Mohd Ismail who is a housewife.

Zainal Abidin, 57, is the chairman of Research and Development; Education and Training, and Information and Human Development Committee.

A former dean of Education Department of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, he also heads various committees and task forces in the State Government.

His involvement in politics started in the early 70s and in 1974, he was elected into the committee of Umno Cheras branch. He has been the branch chairman since 1986 and currently is also the Umno Hulu Langat division chief.

Married to Datin Siti Zaharah Mohd, the couple has four children.

Another experienced hand is four-term Assemblyman Saidin, 59.

He was the State Speaker for three terms, from 1982 to 1990, so this made him one of the more experienced members of the current State Assembly.

This former Government servant is married to Datin Maimunah Mohd Shafie and has four children.

Abu Sujak, 58, served as Deputy Menteri Besar from 1990 to 1995. He had also served as acting Menteri Besar for one month between Sept 11 and Oct 11, 1989, when Muhammad went on leave overseas.

Abu Sujak, who lost the post of the Shah Alam Umno division to Anwar's former political secretary Datuk Salamon Selamat during the party's divisional elections in 1993, is said to have a close relationship with the palace.

He is married to Datin Wan Norseha Wan Nordin and they have eight children.

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 the Menteri Besar in 1986, he was only a two-term Assemblyman. Appointing a newcomer, therefore, would not surprise many, observers said.

At a handing-over ceremony of land titles in Puchong last month which was originally to have been officiated by Muhammad, Mokhtar was already hailed as the next Menteri Besar by those present.

A first-term Assemblyman, he served as an administrative and diplomatic officer for 13 years before he went on optional retirement and joined a German company as general manager.

The son of a village imam, Mokhtar, 51, is currently a successful businessman involved in property development and a councillor with the Petaling Jaya Municipal Council. He holds a Master's Degree in Economics from the University of Wisconsin, United States, and was a college-trained teacher at the Felde Gedangsa primary school in Hulu Selangor for five years.

Fuad, 45, is one of the more prominent youth leaders. After graduating from university, he became actively involved in various youth organisations, including the Malaysian Youth Council and the Islamic Youth Movement or Abim.

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