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Cabinet selection begins (HL)

Sarban Singh; Ainon Mohd

PUTRAJAYA, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today began meeting Barisan Nasional component party leaders to prepare his new Cabinet line-up which may be announced this week, possibly Wednesday.

With seven vacancies after the Nov 29 general election, several deputy ministers are expected to be promoted to ministerial positions.

Sources said former Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib, former Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin, Kelantan Umno liaison chief Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Jelebu MP Datuk Rais Yatim were in the running for Cabinet posts.

Among those who met Dr Mahathir today were MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, Gerakan chief Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik and Sabah BN chairman Datuk Osu Sukam.

They met Dr Mahathir separately and submitted their nominations.

When met at the entrance of the Prime Minister's office, Samy Vellu said he submitted his party's nominations for the posts of one minister, two deputy ministers and two parliamentary secretaries.

"We will accept whatever decision made by the Prime Minister as this is his prerogative," he said.

It is learnt that BN component party leaders from Sarawak will meet Dr Mahathir tomorrow.

Four ministers were defeated in the general election while three others did not seek re-election.

Those who lost were Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob, Second Finance Minister and Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed and Rural Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa.

All are from Umno.

Datuk Lim Ah Lek (Human Resources), Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha (Defence) and Datuk Tajol Rosli Ghazali (Minister in the Prime Minister's Department) did not seek re-election.

From the MCA, sources said, Deputy Education Minister Datuk Fong Chan Onn is expected to be promoted to the post of Minister. He is likely to be given the human resources portfolio.

Deputy Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy is expected to take over from Fong at the Education Ministry and Seremban MP Datuk Hon Choon Kim is tipped to take over from Chan.

Transport Ministry parliamentary secretary Datuk Chor Chee Heung may take over from Datuk Wong See Wah as Deputy Finance Minister while Datuk Ong Ka Ting is likely to be retained as Deputy Home Minister.

It is learnt that the MCA, which traditionally is given four ministerial and six deputy ministerial posts, had asked for an additional deputy ministerial post.

For the MIC, National Unity and Social Development Ministry Parliamentary Secretary Datuk G. Palanivel is likely to be made a deputy minister, replacing Datuk K. Kumaran, the Deputy Rural Development Minister. Kumaran did not contest in the election.

For Gerakan, Segambut MP Dr Tan Kee Kwong and Bukit Bendera MP Chia Kwang Chye, who is the party's secretary-general, are in the running for a deputy minister's post to replace Dr Goh Cheng Teik who was dropped. Goh was Deputy Land and Co-operative Development Minister.

Datuk Kerk Choo Ting, the International Trade and Industry Deputy Minister, is expected to be retained.

From Sarawak, Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Leo Moggie, Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding and Agriculture Minister Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud are likely to be retained.

One minister's post may go to Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Leo Michael Toyad who will replace Defence Minister Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha who did not seek re-election.

From Sabah, Dr Mahathir is likely to bring in Kinabalu MP Tan Sri Bernard Dompok of Upko and Kota Belud MP and former Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Salleh Tun Said. Dompok had previously served as Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

Another ministerial post may go to either Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia or Tan Sri Kasitah Gaddam. Both did not contest in the election but are Senators.

A minister or deputy minister could also come from Terengganu despite the defeat of all BN MPs who contested in the election in the State.

The job could go to Deputy Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Idris Jusoh, who will first have to be made a Senator.

There are four likely candidates for the three ministerial posts allocated to Wanita Umno.

They are: International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman, National Unity and Social Development Minister Datuk Paduka Zaleha Ismail and Kuala Pilah MP Datuk Napsiah Omar.

Umno won 74 of the 104 parliamentary seats it contested, the MCA 27 (out of 35 seats), the MIC seven (out of seven) and the Gerakan took seven (out of 10).

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