

09/12/1999

Ghani gets letter of appointment

Chong Chee Seong

MUAR, Wed. - Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman, who led the Johor Barisan Nasional to a clean sweep of 20 parliamentary and 40 State seats, has been chosen by the BN leadership to be the Menteri Besar for a second term.

Ghani said he received the letter of appointment from BN chairman and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday morning, adding that he would present it to the Sultan of Johor "in a day or two".

He said this after attending the BN victory celebrations organised by the Ledang Umno division in Tangkak last night.

Ghani said Dr Mahathir had also accepted the new State Executive Council list, adding that Exco members would be sworn in soon.

He declined to reveal the names of the proposed Exco members.

In Johor Baru, several newsmen gathered at the entrance of Istana Bukit Serene and at Saujana, the official residence of the Menteri Besar, for the latest news.

But sources said Ghani did not seek an audience with the Sultan today.

In Tangkak last night, Ghani also said that the Johor Legislative Assembly would be convened by next week.

He earlier said that the new State Exco would be enlarged from eight to 10 members as provided for under the 1996 amendment to the Johor Constitution.

When the State Assembly was dissolved last month, Umno had six representatives while MCA had two in the State Exco. Thus, the two additional seats could possibly go to the MIC and Gerakan, which have two Assemblymen each.

Ghani had also said that he would bring in "many new faces" to the new Exco, adding that they would be chosen based on background, experience and areas of speciality.

Three Umno seats in the State Exco have fallen vacant. Datuk Sabariah Ahmad (Agriculture and Rural Development) did not contest in the general election, while Datuk Abdul Kadir Annuar (Religious Affairs) and Dr Abdul Latiff Ahmad (Culture, Youth and Sports) contested parliamentary seats.

The Johor Assembly Speaker's post is also vacant as incumbent Datuk Mohd Ali Hassan is now the MP for Tebrau.

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