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Shahidan to stay on as MB (HL)

Zubaidah Abu Bakar; Elizabeth John

JITRA, Sun. - Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim will continue as Perlis Menteri Besar while the appointment of the Kedah Menteri Besar will be decided soon.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he needed time to decide on the choice of Tan Sri Sanusi Junid's replacement.

"Give me time to think ... we will (appoint) as soon as possible," he said when asked how soon Sanusi's replacement would be announced.

Dr Mahathir, who is Barisan Nasional chairman, also said a post-mortem would be conducted on the coalition's performance in the general election.

"We will study why we won in some places and lost in others," he said.

"I hope with this, we can take steps to strengthen ourselves in the next general election."

The swearing-in ceremony for the Kedah Menteri Besar and State executive councillors has been scheduled for this Saturday at Istana Anak Bukit by the office of the Sultan of Kedah.

Yesterday, Sanusi confirmed speculation that he would not continue as Menteri Besar, citing the general election results as the reason for declining nomination to the post.

Speculation is rife that Tanjong Seri Assemblyman Fadzil Hanafi, 42, will replace Sanusi as Menteri Besar.

A holder of a bachelor's degree in Islamic Law from the prestigious Al-Azhar University of Cairo, Fadzil was the former director of the Special Affairs Division in the State Information Department.

He defeated Pas candidate Niamat Yusoff by a 440-vote majority.

Born in Kampung Gajah Mati, Pokok Sena, Fadzil stood against Pas president Datuk Fadzil Mohd Noor for the Bukit Raya seat in the 1995 general election but lost by 1,829 votes.

Asked about the criteria the new Kedah Menteri Besar should fulfil, Dr Mahathir said:

"He must be a State Assemblyman ... that's all. I do not know how to fix criteria."

On whether the person needed to be religious, Dr Mahathir said all Umno members were religious and thus any Assemblyman could be appointed Menteri Besar.

Meanwhile, Shahidan will have an audience with the Raja of Perlis on Tuesday for consent to form the State Government.

He is expected to be sworn in on Wednesday.

Shahidan thanked Dr Mahathir for his confidence in his leadership.

He said he would meet the Prime Minister at the Prime Minister's Department tomorrow to collect his appointment letter and discuss the State Executive Council line-up.

On the call by Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak for a change in Umno at all levels to win back the confidence of the rakyat, Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said Najib's proposal would be considered.

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