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MB-Kedah (News Focus)  
WHO WILL SUCCEED SANUSI?

ALOR SETAR, Dec 4 (Bernama) -- The announcement by Tan Sri Sanusi Junid that he would not accept any offer to stay on as Kedah Menteri Besar has brought about speculations as to who will be the his successor.

Sanusi, who made the announcement today, however did not indicate who would succeed him.

Political analysts here have speculated several candidates including a few new faces who won in the general election on Monday.

Among the names mentioned are Datuk Syed Razak Syed Zain, former Rector of Institut Pendidikan Tinggi Islam Kedah (Insaniah) Prof Datuk Othman Ishak and former Principal Assistant Director of the Special Affairs Branch, Information Department, Fadzil Hanafi.

At a press conference held at his private residence here, Sanusi said the decision to decline any offer or to continue to hold the post of Kedah Menteri Besar was made after looking at the results of the 10th general election on the night of Nov 29.

In the general election, the Barisan Nasional (BN) only won 24 of the 36 state legislative seats with PAS winning the remaining 12. The opposition also won eight of the 15 parliamentary seats while BN won seven.

The results were described as the worst performance by BN because in the 1995 general election, coalition won all 15 parliamentary seats and PAS only won two state seats while the rest went to BN.

Sanusi was said to have written to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Nov 30 saying that he did not intend to continue as Menteri Besar.

Several days later, he met Dr Mahathir at the Penghulu's house in Kampung Tok Senik, Langkawi and discussed the matter in detail.

Following the discussion, the Prime Minister agreed with his intention and stressed that the decision by them was not influenced by any outside opinion either in the form of whispers or through certain newspapers.

The question over who will be his successor will only be answered on Dec 11 at the swearing-in of the new Menteri Besar in front of the Sultan of Kedah.

Meanwhile, the speculation on Syed Razak being a potential successor is based on his experience and position as State Exco in the state government for three terms.

Previously, Syed Razak, who is also Kuala Kedah Umno division head, was State Exco for Housing and Local Government.

In the just concluded election, he garnered 7,905 votes to beat PAS candidate Kasim Mat Isa with a majority of 1,985 votes in the Kubang Rotan state seat, the only state seat won by the BN in the Kuala Kedah parliamentary constituency.

The Kuala Kedah parliamentary seat, Anak Bukit state seat and Pengkalan Kundor state seat were won by PAS.

Meanwhile, Prof Othman ia among the new faces who was nominated and won the Jitra state seat. He defeated a local, Nayan Saad (PAS) with a 4,234-majority.

As he does not hold any position in the party, the likelihood of Prof Othman being appointed Menteri Besar compared to Syed Razak is rather slim as grassroot support is a crucial factor.

Fadzil is also considered to be in the same situation as Othman. Fadzil has been based in the federal capital all this while and does not hold any

post in the party.

He had contested for the Anak Bukit state seat in the 1995 general election and lost to PAS president Datuk Fadzil Noor. This time around, the religious figure won the Tanjong Seri state seat defeating his former religious teacher, Niamat Yusoff (PAS) with a slim 440-majority.

Political observers feel that Sanusi's successor must be capable of resolving the internal problems within BN to face the subsequent general election.

The candidate must also be influential in the party to close ranks within Umno following the existence of pro- and anti-Sanusi groups.

"This is crucial because the Sanusi factor was seen as the cause for the defeat in the last general election," he said.

Fadzil Noor, who was disappointed by Sanusi's decision, said he could not see anyone among the existing Umno assemblymen as having the calibre to take over the Menteri Besar's post.

-- BERNAMA

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