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Call to separate posts of Menteri Besar and State Umno chairman

KLANG, Sat. - Several Umno leaders in Selangor want a departure from the present system where the Menteri Besar is also chairman of the party liaison committee.

They prefer to have a dynamic and experienced politician to lead the State while another leader leads the party at State level.

The sudden resignation of Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar on Thursday, after over three years as the Menteri Besar, had led to brain-storming and serious thinking among many Umno leaders.

They feel that it is time that Selangor, a fast-developing and highly populated State, has a Menteri Besar who can fully concentrate on State affairs while another person devotes his time to party matters.

"The present system where the Menteri Besar is automatically the chairman of the State Umno liaison committee must change as the party is also dragged into the picture when the Menteri Besar resigns," an Umno leader said.

The talk among Umno leaders in Selangor is that former Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Taib, who is now the State deputy Umno chief, is the best person to lead Umno Selangor.

Some Umno members say that Muhammad, who resigned as Menteri Besar and State Umno liaison committee chairman in April 1997, still has strong support.

A few have openly declared that they want him back.

Umno Selangor leaders felt that Muhammad could still head the State liaison committee even though he would not be Menteri Besar.

According to them, Muhammad, who is also an Umno vice-president, has the calibre and drive to strengthen the party in Selangor due to strong grassroots support.

As for the post of Menteri Besar, the list could be narrowed down to three of the 11 potential candidates.

They are Datuk Dr Zainal Abidin Ahmad, 61; Datuk Mohd Sharif Jajang, 57; and Datuk Mokhtar Dahalan, 56.

Zainal Abidin is the Deputy Menteri Besar; Mohd Sharif heads the State Infrastructure, Information and Information Technology Committee and Mokhtar heads the State Housing, Local Government and Squatters Committee.

Zainal Abidin is said to be the most capable as he has the academic qualifications and vast experience in politics and State administration.

Selangor Umno Youth chief Dr Karim Mansor said the Youth wing would extend its full co-operation and support to the person appointed by Prime Minister and party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Hulu Selangor Umno Youth division chairman Kamsani Mahful, who is State Umno Youth training bureau chairman, said there was no reason why Muhammad could not be appointed State Umno liaison committee chairman.

"If Muhammad is to be the Menteri Besar, there would be a need for a by-election.

"I don't think this is the time to have a by-election in Selangor."

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