

19/08/2000

Dr M picks a young unknown to counter Pas onslaught in Selangor

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THE wait has ended. And once again, the Prime Minister proved he is unpredictable, selecting a relatively unknown candidate for the Selangor Menteri Besar's post.

But in the next few years, 35-year-old Dr Mohd Khir Toyo will become a household name as he steers the State towards attaining developed status by 2005.

Youth is perhaps the most compelling reason and determining factor influencing Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to appoint the relatively unknown outsider who is the youngest Menteri Besar to occupy the seat.

Besides someone with the capability to chart the future path of Selangor, Dr Mahathir clearly needed a young, energetic and dynamic leader to counter Pas' onslaught on the State.

There is no need to remind Umno of the danger as in the last general election, besides losing four seats to Pas, the victory margin for Barisan Nasional candidates in many areas were razor thin.

Some political observers are of the opinion that besides Pahang, the other State on the "danger list" of being captured by Pas in the next general election is Selangor.

Dr Mohd Khir, a dentist by training, himself barely scraped through with a 165-vote majority.

The Prime Minister's choice must have come as a shock to Selangor Umno which had submitted 11 names, including the Deputy Menteri Besar and five Exco members, for Dr Mahathir's consideration.

Despite an absolute rejection of the candidates, which could demoralise many of those on the list and their supporters, this is not the time to sulk.

The State liaison committee now has to live up to its pledge to support whoever is chosen by Dr Mahathir to succeed Datuk Seri Abu Hassan who resigned on Aug 10 due to personal reasons.

One can understand the awkward situation the senior Exco members will be put in.

Taking orders from someone who, in their books, is a "greenhorn", may undoubtedly be difficult to stomach.

Pride should take a backseat if they are to place the interest of the State and party above their own.

Dr Mohd Khir needs all the support he can get, especially since he is relatively inexperienced, to develop the State and unite party factions in the State.

But it cannot be dismissed that the selection of this Sungai Panjang Assemblyman points to a possible new arrangement in the State's make-up.

Dr Mohd Khir will likely be tasked with the administration of the State while party matters are left to former Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, the new Umno Selangor chief.

This is the possible scenario as it is widely known in Umno circles that if there is one person who can rally party members in the State, it is none other than "Mike Tyson".

Giving him the responsibility to lead Umno Selangor, occupying the post last held by Abu Hassan, is thus a sound decision.

At this juncture, it is unclear whether Dr Mohd Khir will re-appoint Zainal Abidin to his present post while retaining the existing Exco line-up.

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