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Fate of Deputy MB

Farush Khan; Ramlan Said

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Selangor will find out on Wednesday whether it will have a Deputy Menteri Besar.

Menteri Besar Dr Mohd Khir Toyo said today the post, previously held by Dusun Tua Assemblyman Datuk Dr Zainal Abidin Ahmad, was now vacant.

"However, I will decide on the matter after consulting the Regent, Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) and the executive councillors."

The announcement, he said, might be made after the weekly Exco meeting on Wednesday.

On rumours that the post would be scrapped, Dr Mohd Khir said his decision would be based partly on the need to avoid creating friction and dispute.

He said this after appearing on TV3 morning talk show Malaysia Hari Ini with Selangor Umno liaison chief Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib.

On his Exco line-up, Dr Mohd Khir said his decision to retain the 10 members appointed by his predecessor Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar was made to ensure the smooth running of the administration.

Although he had said that there might be a reshuffle, the line-up was retained because "all of them have done their job".

"I personally did some checking on their performance. All of them have outlined various programmes and projects to be carried out, complete with the paperwork of which some have already been approved by the Exco.

"To change this team now will cause disruption as the new persons taking over may have to start all over again."

Asked on his open and people-friendly policy, Dr Mohd Khir said he believed it was the best approach in winning the people's support.

"Although I am the Menteri Besar, the free dental service for the community initiated five years ago by myself and a group of friends will be continued."

He said the State Government would try to get the involvement of the people in the implementation of projects and programmes.

He was also asked on the threat posed by Pas which had made inroads in the State during the last general election, including the slim majority he received for his Sungai Panjang constituency.

"I am confident Umno and Barisan Nasional will fare better in 2004. Steps to win back the support of the people, especially among the younger generation, are being taken."

On Muhammad's appointment as State Umno chief, Dr Mohd Khir described it as the best arrangement, saying it would not undermine the State administration.

"Instead, it gives us the chance to focus, myself on State matters and Muhammad on party affairs, especially in winning the support of the Malays and the people."

During the MHI programme, Dr Mohd Khir said the State Government planned to bring information technology to all areas by establishing computer centres in villages.

"But we do not have the funds to build the centre in every village. So, what we are going to do is to have one centre serving a few villages."

Meanwhile, Muhammad said Dr Mohd Khir's appointment had been well accepted by all parties but he did not discount the possibility of problems cropping up later.

"It is my duty as party State chief to ensure the new administration is

free of any hindrance," said Muhammad.

Abu Hassan took over from him to only step down three years and eight months later, citing health reasons and the need to spend more time with his family.

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