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Many aspirants for top Selangor post

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WHO will be the next Selangor Menteri Besar?

That is inevitably the question on everyone's lips following the resignation of Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar from the State's top post.

While the answer can only come from the Prime Minister, it has not stopped speculation on who may possibly fill the vacated position, now regarded as a "hot seat" following the premature resignations of its last two Menteris Besar.

Excluding Abu Hassan, Umno has 25 assemblymen in the State Legislative Assembly - any one of them could be picked to succeed Abu Hassan, albeit non-assemblymen also stand an outside chance.

Selangor Umno deputy liaison chairman and the State's former Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib will submit the names of possible candidates to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

The committee met yesterday to discuss Abu Hassan's resignation and his possible successor.

Initially, sources said "almost everyone" stood a chance of filling the seat because as many as 15 names had been proposed, but this long list has subsequently been trimmed down.

At a meeting with the committee at Putrajaya yesterday, Dr Mahathir had asked for the names to be submitted to him.

The names being bandied around now are the two "Zainal Abidins" - Deputy Menteri Besar Datuk Dr Zainal Abidin Ahmad and Batang Kali Assemblyman Datuk Zainal Abidin Sakom; and State Housing, Local Government and Squatters' Committee chairman and Kelana Jaya Assemblyman Datuk Mokhtar Dahalan.

Many agree that the Deputy Menteri Besar holds the edge over the other candidates, but it will not be a surprise if he is beaten by someone else to the post.

An intriguing development, however, is that Zainal Abidin Sakom, who was Muhammad's former political secretary, yesterday offered to vacate his seat to enable his former boss to contest to enable him (Muhammad) to be appointed as Menteri Besar.

Another name whispered is Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Dr Shafie Mohd Salleh. But the drawback here is that he has to vacate his Kuala Langat parliamentary seat to contest a State seat but a by-election in these times is seen as "risky".

Among the dark horses are Puchong Assemblyman Datuk Satim Diman and State Exco member for Rural Development, Agriculture and Fisheries, and Sabak Assemblyman Datuk Raja Ideris Raja Ahmad.

If seniority is one of the factors to be considered by Dr Mahathir, besides Zainal Abidin Ahmad, Ampang Assemblyman Datuk Mufti Suib and Selayang Baharu representative Datuk Ahmad Bhari Abd Rahman are the possible candidates.

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