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Tongues wag but Abu Hassan has done the right thing

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ARE there anymore skeletons falling out of the political cupboard? Or have we seen the last of them?

Official confirmation yesterday of Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar's resignation as Selangor Menteri Besar has triggered intense discussion on the reasons behind his departure.

Abu Hassan had earlier invited the media to a conference at his official residence in Shah Alam, but decided against it around noon.

No reasons for the cancellation were given and this in itself has triggered fresh speculations. Tongues wagged even more as observers tried to piece together why it was cancelled, considering that the whole country was more than eager to learn the full story behind Abu Hassan's decision.

That the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, had wasted no time in accepting Abu Hassan's resignation, has led many people to conclude that Abu Hassan's "personal" reasons were very serious indeed. In fact, it may not be wrong to conclude that Abu Hassan - dubbed Mr Clean - saw little chance of effectively defending whatever allegations levelled against him.

His decision must be respected, and the reasons must have been overwhelming and very compelling for Dr Mahathir to have accepted the resignation immediately. Attempts by Members of Parliament and State Assemblymen from Selangor also failed to convince Dr Mahathir to reconsider his decision. It does seem that Abu Hassan's "personal" reasons were simply too strong, too compelling.

Whether his resignation from the post he held for the last three years and two months is an "admission" of whatever wrongdoing on Abu Hassan's part is left to everyone's guess, but he has certainly done the right thing by quitting.

Having dealt with the issue swiftly, Dr Mahathir now focuses his attention on finding a suitable replacement. This may not be easy. It must be noted that two other former chief executives from Selangor left their office in somewhat questionable manner.

Datuk Harun Idris (1964 to 1976) resigned as MB on March 18, 1976 after being found guilty of three corruption charges. He was jailed for two years and received the royal pardon on Aug 31, 1987.

Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib (1986 to 1997) resigned on April 14, 1997 and took leave from his post as Umno vice-president to stand trial in an Australian court in connection with an alleged attempt to bring out of the country about RM2.4 million in various currencies. He was acquitted in May 1998. He was also acquitted on Dec 29, 1998 in Kuala Lumpur on charges of failing to fully declare his assets to the Anti-Corruption Agency.

To help make the selection easier, or credible, perhaps those in the position to be considered should raise their hands and own up if they have any skeletons hidden somewhere. For the sake of King and country, and the future of the nation's children, they better state their liabilities now, before someone somewhere exposes them.

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