

Top editorial staff of NST told to leave

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By Joseph Masilamany

PETALING JAYA, Sun: Three top editorial staff of the *New Straits Times* were asked to leave yesterday.

The three, veteran journalist Tan Sri Samad Ismail, Datuk Mazlan Nordin and Zainon Ahmad, received their termination letters, signed by the daily's managing director, Faiz Ishak.

All three were part of an advisory committee established last year after the former group editor-in-chief Datuk Abdul Kadir Jasin was removed.

Contacted at his home today, Samad, widely known as Pak Samad, confirmed the termination

and said that no reason was given in the letter, which took immediate effect.

"I was asked to help out at *New Straits Times* last year by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Tun Daim Zainuddin," Samad said.

Asked what he intends to do now, he said: "Since I am no longer needed, I will enjoy my retirement with my grandchildren."

Zainon and Mazlan were not available for comment.

Zainon's wife told *The Sun* that he left for South Korea last night.

The terminations come shortly after Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad was appointed group editor-in-chief of the *New Straits Times*.

Abdullah was political

secretary to the former Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak and has also served as Malaysia's representative to the United Nations.

Media observers said the terminations may be part of Abdullah's revamping of giant local publishing house which is now saddled with debts.

They said Abdullah's priority is to win back the readers of its flagship *New Straits Times*.

The newspaper has been losing readership over the past few years and its circulation is now down to 140,000.

Datuk Ahmad Talih remains its group editor while Datuk Ahmad Rejal Arbce is group editor of its sister publication, *Rerita Harian*.