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Ali Abul Hassan made economic adviser

FORMER Bank Negara Governor Tan Sri Ali Abul Hassan Sulaiman (pic) has been appointed as special economic adviser to the Prime Minister, to facilitate Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in making decisions.

"I have a lot of work to do now and there are some things which require detailed examination, particularly financial matters," the Prime Minister said after launching the Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia campus in Gombak outside Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

"I have to entrust him (Ali Abul Hassan) to digest and inform me what all these things are about, so that I can make decisions," he said.

Ali Abul Hassan is the second such appointee. He joins Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop who took up a similar position last May.

When asked about having two economic advisers, Dr Mahathir said: "They are not just economic advisers. They don't just come to meetings, they have lots of work... work which I cannot perform myself."

Dr Mahathir said he spent a lot of time going round the country meeting people.

"If I don't meet the people, then they say I am not meeting the people. There are lots of people writing to me asking me to solve all their financial problem, personal problem, their marriage and all that.

"I have to attend weddings, I have to open the university, I have to plant trees and talk to the press...", he said jokingly.

Ali Abul Hassan, 60, was appointed Bank Negara governor in September 1998. He retired on May 1 last year and was succeeded by Datuk Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz.

When Ali Abul Hassan came in as the governor in 1998, the central bank was amid implementing a series of measures to revive the economy and stabilise the then free-floating ringgit.

Born in Penang, Ali Abul Hassan served as the director-general of the Economic Planning Unit in the Prime Minister's Department for seven years until 1998.

He also served as secretary to the National Economic Action Council from September 1998 to April 2000.

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