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ALI-ADVISER

PM APPOINTS ALI ABUL HASSAN AS SPECIAL ECONOMIC ADVISER

KUALA LUMPUR, April 17 (Bernama) -- Former Bank Negara Governor Tan Sri Ali Abul Hassan Sulaiman has been appointed as special economic adviser to the Prime Minister.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Ali Abul Hassan's appointment was to facilitate him 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 told reporters after launching the Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM) campus in Gombak here today.

"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's appointment is the second such advisory position.

Last May, Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop was appointed as the economic adviser to the prime minister.

When asked that he has now 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 also said that 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 to replace Tan Sri Ahmad Mohamed Don. He retired in 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 back then free-float ringgit.

In a move to contain currency speculation, the central bank announced a week prior to his appointment that effective Oct 1 1998, the ringgit will no longer be tradeable overseas.

The ringgit bogged down by as much as 40 percent in value at that time versus the US dollar became pegged at RM3.80.

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.

As the EPU chief, he also saw Malaysia's aggressive thrust into privatisation of government utilities, the biggest being electricity and telecommunications.

The EPU, led by him, nurtured most of the big national projects, including the ultra-modern KL International Airport, the capital's mass transit system and the North-South Highway.

He has participated in all of Malaysia's Five-Year Plans which included the two long-term Outline Perspective Plans and two Industrial Master Plans.

In his career, Ali Abul Hassan has overseen the transformation of the country's economy from agricultural base to industrial base and the diversification of traditional industries to include micro-processors, semi-conductors and other hi-tech products.

He was also the secretary to the National Economic Action Council (NEAC) in Sept 1998 to April 2000.

He graduated from the University of Malaya with an Honours degree in economics and a Master's degree in Economic Development from the Wisconsin University in the United States. -- BERNAMA

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