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Abdul Malek likely to be Court of Appeal president

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - A widely respected judge is likely to be made president of the Court of Appeal, filling a position which has been vacant for a year.

The New Straits Times has learnt that the Conference of Rulers today endorsed Datuk Abdul Malek Ahmad as the candidate.

His appointment, to be announced later, is likely to be welcomed by the Malaysian Bar which has a healthy respect for his legal knowledge and independence.

This decision to appoint him is seen as a step by the Government to restore the image and integrity of the judiciary.

Lawyers interviewed say Abdul Malek is hardworking and delivers his judgments fast. He has also not attracted any controversy over the years.

Many of them expected him to be elevated to a more senior position in the judiciary earlier but he was bypassed by others.

Abdul Malek was a High Court judge from 1991 to 1995, and was appointed to the Court of Appeal in 1996.

On May 1, 1999, he was made a Federal Court judge.

Among the important cases he dealt with as Federal Court judge was the RM100 million defamation suit by former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim against former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1999.

He was also in the Federal Court panel which ruled that the 60-day detention order by police against five Opposition leaders and activists under the Internal Security Act was unlawful.

The appellants were Keadilan Youth chief Mohamad Ezam Mohd Noor, its national vice-president Chua Tian Chang (Tian Chua), reformasi activist Hishammudin Rais, Jemaah Islah Malaysia president Saari Sungib and Raja Petra Raja Kamarudin.

Several other judges are likely to be elevated.

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