

New Cabinet expected this week

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PM says will seek consent of the King before making an announcement

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ALOR SETAR: The Cabinet line-up will be announced this week, but not before being presented to the King for consent, says Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

The newly-minted Prime Minister said he would announce the line-up once Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah had consented to it.

"I have to present to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong first. Only after the King has consented to it then I'll make the announcement," he told a press conference at Masjid Jamek Badlishah in Yan, Kedah, yesterday.

The PM was on a visit to several disaster areas in Merbok and Yan. It was his first official visit following his swearing-in as the ninth Prime Minister last Saturday.

He also called on the public not to believe in a purported Cabinet list that had gone viral, saying it was fake.

Asked who would be his deputy, Ismail Sabri said he would consider all parties involved.

On the National Recovery Council (NRC) and Special Committee on Covid-19, Ismail Sabri said the Opposition had shown encouraging response to his suggestion of cooperation with the new government.

He said Opposition MPs could give their input to the NRC and Special Committee on how to bring the country out from the crisis.

"The Opposition has given me good response and I will meet them soon," he said, adding that the discussion would centre on how the Opposition could make its contribution.

Ismail Sabri, however, said no Opposition MPs would be part of the new Cabinet as the new Federal Government was not a unity government. In his maiden speech on



New day: Ismail Sabri (right) tapping his office access card on his first day in Perdana Putra as Tan Sri Mohd Zuki Ali, the Chief Secretary to the Government, accompanies the Prime Minister. — Bernama

Aug 22, Ismail Sabri offered the Opposition the chance to be part of the NRC and the Special Committee on Covid-19, saying that jostling for political power must be stamped out.

He said it was imperative that political stability was swiftly achieved through togetherness, and this included cross-party cooperation.

Political analysts say it is vital to have his Cabinet up and running to handle the Covid-19 pandemic and to address economic issues.

They also said that it was crucial for Ismail Sabri to put his stamp on it.

The next three months, they added, would be a critical period as the nation scrutinised the Umno vice-president and Bera MP as to whether he would live up to

his promises.

Political analyst Prof Datuk Dr Shamsul Amri Baharuddin of the UKM Institute of Ethnic Studies said Ismail Sabri was expected to form a Cabinet that would be able to work more and talk less.

"He is not known as the typical Umno firebrand politician and is not from the prestigious and elite schools which many of the top leaders of Umno were from.

"He can, however, be vocal and firm when he wants to, as we saw when he led the Barisan Nasional MPs in defiance of the coalition chair and his own party president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi to retain support for former prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

"He was also a student leader at Universiti Malaya. All these characteristics of his will be applied when

he chooses the Cabinet ministers to ensure it is a Cabinet he can work with.

"Being the first non-Umno president to hold the premiership, it would not be a surprise if Ismail Sabri turns to people like Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Mohamad Hassan and appoints him to the Cabinet as a senator to ensure he had the support and right ideas," said Prof Shamsul.

He agreed that it might work to appease the Umno faction that Ismail Sabri might have crossed words with in his rise to be the Prime Minister.

"It is most likely that he will first announce the senior ministers in charge of clusters and perhaps posts for the party presidents, before he announces the full Cabinet line-up," said Prof Shamsul.

He thinks Ismail Sabri may buy some time before naming the deputy prime minister which can be a contentious issue with Umno, as it may not go down well with those in his party who feel that he may be giving too much to other parties.

"He has made a deal with Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia as the biggest bloc in the government but he may delay the deal until the whole Cabinet is announced," the professor said.

The current main contenders for the deputy prime minister's post are Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainudin and Datuk Seri Azmin Ali.

All 31 Bersatu MPs supported Ismail Sabri as the ninth Prime Minister with conditions, among which is that the deputy prime minister will be from Bersatu.

Prof Shamsul said the premier did not have the luxury to shuffle and reshuffle like his Barisan predecessors, as he has many parties to please now among his supporters.

A political analyst from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Mazlan Ali, said the new Cabinet must be one that was seen to be working for the people.

"It has to be a lean government which does not have too many portfolios and is not burdened with too many positions such as two deputy ministers for one ministerial portfolio.

"Ismail Sabri should appoint ministers with credibility and who are workers, as he had promised in the conditional support with Perikatan parties.

"These three months will be a very critical 'do or die' phase for the Prime Minister.

"He will have to put his stamp on his Cabinet with some new faces so that it is not dismissed as Perikatan 2.0," added Mazlan.

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