

Najib's new Cabinet to have 'familiar faces', more Umno men
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By Jahabar Sadiq

KUALA LUMPUR, May 14 — The new Cabinet to be announced tomorrow will have a familiar look and loaded with Umno lawmakers, with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak having one eye on this year's party polls.

One likely to make a comeback is Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Mansor, the Barisan Nasional (BN) and Umno secretary-general who gained notoriety several years ago for allegedly fixing judicial appointments during the Mahathir era.

Also on the shortlist is Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh, the former Terengganu menteri besar who together with Tengku Adnan is a member of the BN war room that planned the coalition's Election 2013 campaign.

Another member of the war room, Rompin MP Datuk Seri Jamaluddin Jarjis, could also be rewarded with a Cabinet post, sources said today.

But they said that no losers in the general election will be appointed to the Cabinet through appointments as a federal senator.

The Cabinet list is being scrutinised with interest on expectations that they have to be in line with Najib's drive for reforms after getting his own mandate in the May 5 general elections.

There has been speculation that he would also opt for newer and younger faces to push his reform agenda outlined under the BN manifesto and various socio-economic initiatives since he took power in 2009.

One polarising figure in the discussion for a Cabinet position is Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin. The names of two state companies chiefs, Malayan Banking Bhd chief executive officer Datuk Seri Abdul Wahid Omar and Khazanah Nasional Berhad's managing director Tan Sri Azman Mokhtar have also been bandied about but there is strong sentiment in Putrajaya that by virtue of winning 88 federal seats, Umno must be rewarded.

One polarising figure in the discussion for a Cabinet position is Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin with strong push back from the Mahathir camp, arguing that his baggage from the Abdullah years will be a liability.

In his corner is Najib who believes that Khairy, who tripled his majority from 5,746 votes in Election 2008 to 18,357 in this year's polls, will be important in tackling social media and coming up with strategies to win the young.

One tricky move is whether to remove Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein as the Home Minister or retain the Umno vice-president in that post. An online poll by The Malaysian Insider today showed that out of nearly 18,000 respondents, 97 per cent were against him to remain as Home Minister.

The other two Umno veeps, Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal, are expected to keep their Cabinet posts as Defence and Rural Development ministers

respectively.

It is also understood that Kelantan Umno chief Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed is expected to keep his post as International Trade and Industry Minister.

State news agency Bernama reported today that Najib is scheduled to have an audience with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Halim Muadzam Shah at Istana Negara at noon tomorrow to get approval for his new Cabinet line-up.

One tricky move is whether to remove Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein as the Home Minister or retain him in that post. According to the statement issued by the Prime Minister's Department today, the King has agreed that ceremony to present letters of appointment, as well as for the appointed ministers and deputy ministers to take the oath of office, loyalty and secrecy be held at the palace at 9.30am on Thursday.

The Malaysian Insider also learnt that Sungai Besar MP Datuk Noriah Kasnon is expected to fill the post of women, family and community development minister after her stint there as the deputy minister since last year.

Bernama had earlier reported that several new faces from Sabah and Sarawak could fill vacancies caused by MCA and Gerakan's decision not to accept any Cabinet posts following their drubbing in the May 5 general elections.

Among the names mentioned are Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDP) deputy president Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, 52, who is Bintulu MP and ex-chairman of the BN Backbenchers Club.

Other than Tiong, two MPs from Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS), namely Datin Linda Tsen Thau Lin, 57, (Batu Sapi) and Datuk Mary Yap Kain Ching @ Mary Yap Ken Jin, 62, (Tawau), are also speculated will be new faces in the Cabinet.

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