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**HEADLINE:** NAJIB'S MY MAN

**BYLINE:** P. Selvarani; Suraya Pauzi

**BODY:**

PUTRAJAYA: It was THE Press conference that the media had been anticipating for the past two months.

Although news of Datuk Seri Najib Razak's appointment as Malaysia's ninth Deputy Prime Minister, and Datuk Seri Abdullah Badawi's deputy, was front-paged on almost all the major newspapers in the country yesterday morning, there was nothing like getting it from the horse's mouth.

As soon as the media was informed that the Prime Minister would hold a Press conference after the Cabinet meeting at 1pm yesterday, hordes of journalists turned up at his office in Putrajaya as early as 11am.

They trooped into the main security office of the Prime Minister's Department to get their passes only to be told that the security passes would be issued much later.

At 12.45pm, the journalists were told to collect their passes and make their way to the Press Room on the ground floor of the Prime Minister's Department.

By 1.10pm, the room was packed to capacity with a total of 13 television cameras mounted high on tripods and trained at a door on the left side of the room - where Abdullah was expected to make his entry.

The photographers, concentrated at the front part of the room, were all ready to snap at anything that moved.

Two additional rows of chairs were brought in to accommodate the ever-increasing number of newsmen from the print and electronic media, including those from foreign wire services.

Security personnel conducted a "bomb sweep" of the room and even checked the fire alarm.

When a female staff of the department emerged and announced that Abdullah was on the way at 2.03pm, the whole room fell silent as his bodyguards entered.

Abdullah made his appearance at 2.05pm, and went straight to the single podium in the front of the room where he proceeded to announce the appointment of Najib as Deputy Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister was all smiles throughout the Press conference and was in a visibly upbeat mood.

But he refused to answer a journalist's query on the date of the coming general election - a question which he has told the Press in the recent past not to bring up.

He said that with the Cabinet reshuffle, his Cabinet was now in

mantap (solid) condition.

Abdullah said that the new appointments were welcomed by all the Cabinet Ministers who pledged to give their full cooperation and support.

He said he needed a deputy to help him as he would be travelling a lot this year to meet his Asean counterparts as well as attend summits and conferences, more so with his additional responsibilities as chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

On the appointment of Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin as Agriculture Minister, Abdullah said he needed a senior Minister to helm the portfolio to modernise and enhance the sector.

Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Effendi Norwawi was made Special Functions Minister while Datuk Dr Jamaluddin Jarjis replaces Muhyiddin as Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister.

The surprise announcement was that of Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop as Second Finance Minister.

Abdullah, who retains the Finance Minister and Home Minister's portfolios, said he appointed Nor Mohamed as he needed someone who was not a politician and who could be at the Finance Ministry full-time to assist him in his duties.

"There is a lot of work to be done at the Ministry.

He is a professional who can continue to monitor our economy," the Prime Minister said.

After 15 minutes, Abdullah announced an end to the Press conference although some journalists were pressing for questions, and left the room at 2.20pm.

With the Prime Minister's exit, the room was abuzz as journalists ran to all corners to call their respective offices and file oral reports while laptops were snapped open on floors and chairs as photos were immediately downloaded and transmitted via the Internet.

BIODATA DATUK SERI MOHAMED NAJIB **TUN ABDUL RAZAK** Deputy Prime Minister/Defence Minister Member of Parliament for Pekan, Pahang Born on July 23, 1953, in Kuala Lipis, Pahang Education: Degree in industrial economics from Nottingham University, United Kingdom DATUK Seri Najib started out as a Petronas public relations manager in 1974.

In 1976, when he was only 23, he was thrust into the world of politics when he contested the Pekan parliamentary seat and won it unopposed following the death of his father **Tun Abdul Razak**, who was also Malaysia's second Prime Minister.

Najib was appointed Deputy Minister of Energy, Telecommunications and Posts in 1978 and in 1980, became the Deputy Minister of Education.

In 1981, he was appointed the Deputy Minister of Finance.

The following year, he became the Menteri Besar of Pahang.

He was appointed a full Minister in 1986 and was given the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport portfolio.

In 1990, he was made Defence Minister and in 1995, he took over as Education Minister.

He was back as Defence Minister after the 1999 general election.

He is married to Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor and they have five children.

THE OTHER NEW APPOINTMENTS \* TAN SRI MUHYIDDIN MOHD YASSIN

Agriculture Minister Member of Parliament for Pagoh, Johor Born on March 15, 1947 in Muar, Johor Education: Degree in economics and Malay studies from the University of Malaya MUHYIDDIN started as an assistant secretary in the training and scholarship section of the Johor State Secretariat.

In 1978, he contested and won the Pagoh parliamentary seat.

Three years later, he became parliamentary secretary to the Foreign Ministry.

The following year, he was made Deputy Federal Territory Minister.

In 1983, he became Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry.

In 1986, he won the Bukit Serampang State seat in the general election and was made Johor Menteri Besar - a position he held for nine years. In 1995, he again won the Pagoh parliamentary seat.

He was the Minister of Youth and Sports until 1999 when he became Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister.

He is married to Puan Sri Hajah Noorainee Abdul Rahman.

They have four children. \* DATUK Dr JAMALUDDIN MOHD JARJIS Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Member of Parliament for Rompin, Pahang Born on May 25, 1951 in Pekan, Pahang Education: Obtained first degree in electrical engineering from the University of Manchester, UK, and masters degree from the University of Manitoba, Canada. Earned Ph.D in electrical engineering from the University of McGill, Canada. JAMALUDDIN began his career as a lecturer at the University of Technology Malaysia (UTM) in 1974.

In 1981, he founded an engineering consultancy firm called J & A Associates.

He was the Pahang Umno Youth chief and was elected to the Umno Supreme Council in 2000.

He has been holding the Rompin parliamentary seat since 1990.

He was Tenaga Nasional chairman from Sept 2000 until November 2002 when he was appointed the Second Finance Minister.

He is married to Datin Dr Kalsom Ismail and they have four children. \* TAN SRI NOR MOHAMED YAKCOP Second Finance Minister Born on Aug 24, 1947 in Penang Education: University of Malaya, 1969-1972 B.A (Hons.) Kuala Lumpur in Economics, Catholic University, 1977, M.B.A.

in Leuven, Belgium. NOR MOHAMED started out as a clerk with Bank Negara 1968 and worked his way up to the post of manager in the Bank Department of Bank Negara in 1986.

In 1998, he was made Special Adviser to Bank Negara on monetary and financial policies.

He was picked by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to steer Malaysia out of the Asian financial crisis in 1997.

He was also credited with many of Malaysia's core economic policies such as pegging the ringgit at 3.80 to the American dollar.

In 2000, Nor Mohamed was appointed Special Adviser to the Prime Minister, a position he retained when Datuk Seri Abdullah Badawi took over as PM.

Nor Mohamed is an adjunct professor with Universiti Utara Malaysia and a director of Malaysia Airline System Berhad.

He is married to Puan Sri Fawziah Begum.

They have three children. \* DATUK SERI DR MOHD EFFENDI NORWAWI Minister with special functions in the Prime Minister's Department

Member of Parliament for Kuala Rejang, Sarawak Born on Feb 1, 1948, in Singapore Education: Degree in development administration from the University of Tasmania, Australia MOHD EFFENDI started his career as an assistant secretary in the Implementation Coordination Development Administration Unit in the Prime Minister's Department in 1972 In 1979, he became deputy chairman of the Sarawak Economic Development Corporation.

He left two years later to venture into business.

He returned to Sarawak SEDC in 1980 and became its executive chairman.

In 1995, he returned to the corporate world with his wife Datin Seri Farida Hashim, to start Encorp Group Sdn Bhd, which operates NTV7, a private broadcasting station.

Effendi is vice president of Parti Pesaka Bumiputra Bersatu (PBB).

He contested and won the Dalat State constituency in 1991.

He retained the seat in the 1996 State election.

In the 1999 general election, he won the Kuala Rejang parliamentary seat.

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