

28 AUG 1996

Halim-Appointment (Pix)

HALIM PLEASANTLY SURPRISED TO BE AT HELM OF CIVIL SERVICE

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 28 (Bernama) -- After more than 30 years of service that were confined to the Foreign Ministry, Datuk Abdul Halim Ali certainly never expected to be given the top post in the civil service.

Halim, who has been appointed the new Chief Secretary to the Government effective Sept 17, nevertheless viewed the appointment as a big honour because he is the first person from the Foreign Ministry to hold the post.

"I had not expected this appointment at all but I am very happy with the trust given me by the government to hold such an important and high post," he told reporters at Wisma Putra here following an announcement by the Prime Minister's Department on his appointment.

Halim, 52, expressed his thanks and appreciation to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid for their confidence in him, and said his experience at the Foreign Ministry would come in handy in his new post.

Coincidentally, Halim assumed his post of Secretary-General at the Foreign Ministry today, replacing Tan Sri Ahmad Kamil Jaafar who retired.

The latest appointment means he has made history in the national administration as the Secretary-General of a ministry who held the post for the shortest period.

Halim, who was previously Deputy Secretary-General (1) in the Foreign Ministry, will serve for merely 20 days as Secretary-General before taking over as Chief Secretary to the Government.

He succeeds Ahmad Sarji whose service was extended twice after he reached retirement age of 55 years.

Wisma Putra staff, who this morning heard Halim's address as the new Secretary-General, greeted news of Halim's latest appointment with surprise and happiness.

Asked on his agenda for his new post, Halim said: "Well, I do have some knowledge of the government's aspirations, about its wish to further enhance the effectiveness and productivity of the civil service.

"I have been back in Malaysia for six years already and we have seen how much the civil service has improved and this is the good work done by Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji himself. I believe with all the infrastructure and changes made by him, I can continue with his efforts," he said.

Halim, who holds a B.A. (Hons) from Universiti Malaya, has served in the Foreign Ministry for 30 years and four months. He began his career as assistant secretary in the Middle East Division and has steadily risen up the ranks.

"Since I started working, the Foreign Ministry has been my only station but despite this I believe my experience in the ministry will be useful in my new duty," he said.

Asked on his new priority, he said: "The specifics I can't tell because I need to meet Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji, the Prime Minister and others for their views and guidance on the efforts that need to be given priority."

Asked when he was told of the appointment, he said: "Before this I heard of the recommendation made for me but the official announcement is today. The announcement made today is something unexpected."

He said Dr Mahathir had also broached the subject with him before.

Halim said he would give attention to all matters connected to the civil service, including efforts to improve the quality of service and safeguarding the welfare of workers at all levels.

Halim may not get to occupy his new room at Wisma Putra because it is being renovated.

On returning to Wisma Putra from a lunch with diplomats today, he was greeted by several Wisma Putra officers who had been waiting to congratulate him on hearing news of his appointment.

Halim then proceeded to attend a post-Cabinet meeting and within that period at least two bouquets of flowers were sent to his office.

In his address to Wisma Putra officers this morning, Halim urged them to intensify efforts to implement all government policies properly to prepare for the 21st century.

"We are also taking all measures to implement or achieve Vision 2020 where international relations are an important element," he added. --

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