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Megat Junid: I'm dazed but ready for new challenge

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - In a state of slight daze, Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob today described his appointment as Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister as a reflection of the Prime Minister's confidence in him.

The appointment, he said, would be a new experience and challenge.

"I am slightly dazed, having been a security man for 11 years," he told reporters at his Home Ministry office. "The approach is different and I will have to learn from the bottom like I did when I first joined the Home Ministry."

"I will decide on my plans for the Ministry after I am briefed by the officers."

Megat Junid said although he was only informed by acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on Monday, he got wind of the appointment from Dr Mahathir before the latter left for London for the Multimedia Super Corridor roadshow.

"The Prime Minister just gave me a smile at the airport. I know that smile ...when he smiles like that, I know something is coming," he quipped. "I know him too well."

Megat Junid said his successor, Datuk Tajol Rosli Ghazali, who will leave his post as Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister, will be a capable replacement to especially deal with problems of dadah abuse and illegal immigrants.

Megat Junid will relinquish his position as chairman of the National Dadah Council, chairman of the support and services committee for the 1998 Commonwealth Games, and member of the Cabinet Committees on Social Ills and Foreign Labour.

These appointments were made by virtue of him being the Deputy Home Minister.

However, he said he was requested by Anwar to remain as Pemadam chairman for the time being, as this was an appointment made by the Prime Minister.

On his feelings about leaving the Home Ministry, Megat Junid admitted to having mixed feelings.

"I will leave the Ministry I am really familiar with," he said. "I know a lot of people in the various agencies."

When pointed out that he was one of the most senior Deputy Ministers and was in line for a promotion, Megat Junid said the job was more important than the post.

"What is important is whether we can do the job effectively or not," he said.

His greatest satisfaction while serving as Deputy Home Minister?

"Implementing various measures to combat the problems of dadah and illegal immigrants," he said.

This included upgrading the status of dadah prevention and rehabilitation division to an agency headed by a Commissioner of Police, establishment of Pengasih - an association of former addicts - and to enhance unity in Pemadam.

It also included establishing co-operation with the Indonesian Government to send back illegal immigrants.

Meanwhile, Tajol described his appointment as Deputy Home Minister as an honour.

"I am touched that I have been chosen to undertake the heavy

responsibilities as Deputy Home Minister," he told reporters at his office.

Only informed of his appointment this morning, Tajol Rosli said he would see Anwar soon to discuss his new appointment.

"As I am still new in this Ministry. I will seek guidance from Megat Junid on matters concerning the Ministry. I will concentrate on continuing the policies introduced by Megat Junid."

Tajol Rosli also thanked his Minister Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh for giving him the trust to carry out his responsibilities as Deputy Minister.

Azmi Khalid, parliamentary secretary in the Prime Minister's Department, who will succeed Tajol, said he was surprised and touched by the appointment.

"It is an honour for Perlis," he said.

Thanking Dr Mahathir, he pledged to live up to the expectations of the leadership.

Azmi is in fact familiar with the housing industry, having served as deputy general manager of Selangor State Development Corporation (PKNS) between 1966 and 1978.

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