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Dompok appoints Yong as Minister

Joniston Bangkuai; Jaswinder Kaur

KOTA KINABALU, Thurs. - Tan Sri Bernard Giluk Dompok, who was sworn in as Sabah Chief Minister today, has named a continuity Cabinet, retaining all Ministers and his predecessor Datuk Yong Teck Lee in the line-up.

However, in a surprise move, Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Abdul Ghapur Salleh declined to be included in the Cabinet.

Ghapur's decision not to accept re-appointment leaves a vacancy in the 11-member Cabinet.

Yong resigned as Chief Minister today to pave the way for the appointment of Dompok as the new Chief Minister under a system to rotate the post among the three main communities in Sabah.

Dompok took his oath of office at Istana Negeri at 10.10am before the Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Sakaran Dandai, witnessed by High Court judge Datuk Charles Ho.

After his swearing-in, Dompok had a 20-minute audience with Sakaran before the Ministers took their oath of office.

The first to be sworn in was Yong, followed by Datuk Joseph Kurup, Datuk Tham Nyip Shen, Datuk Lajim Ukin, Datuk Wilfred Bumburing, Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia, Datuk Yahya Hussein, Datuk Raymond Tan Shu Kiah and Datuk Dayang Mahani Pengiran Raffae.

Ghapur, who is Sabah Umno liaison committee deputy chief, left Istana Negeri shortly after Dompok was sworn in.

Ghapur told reporters outside Istana Negeri that he had informed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad of his decision to be left out of the Cabinet.

On his reason for declining to remain in the State Cabinet, Ghapur merely said he had already resigned before.

Ghapur had in December last year tendered his resignation from the State Cabinet and as Sabah Umno deputy liaison chief but later withdrew the resignation on the advice of the Prime Minister.

He had then cited failure to carry out his duties as the reason for his decision to resign.

Asked if the Prime Minister had agreed to his decision to be left out of the State Cabinet, Ghapur said: "I don't know whether he agreed or not but I think he has already agreed."

He said that his decision not to remain in the Cabinet was not because he was unhappy with Sabah Umno.

Ghapur declined to say if he would also be resigning as Sabah Umno deputy chief, saying that he would issue a statement a week from now.

Meanwhile, Yong described his re-inclusion in the Cabinet as "a new feeling serving in another role".

It is unprecedented in Sabah's history that an immediate former Chief Minister is re-included in the State Cabinet.

Dompok, at a Press conference later, said he would act as Finance Minister until a new Minister was appointed to the portfolio.

He also said he would continue to hold the portfolio of Tourism and Environmental Development Minister.

"The tourism industry can become a revenue earner for the State and can help Sabah overcome the economic slowdown.

"I have been the Minister of Tourism and Environmental Development for a while and I know duties and plans which need to be carried out."

Dompok said Yong was appointed Minister in the Chief Minister's

Department.

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