

09/09/1998

Mustapa to assist PM in preparing 1999 Budget

DATUK Mustapa Mohamed, who was appointed Second Finance Minister on Monday, said his work will be to assist Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who is First Finance Minister.

His first role as Second Finance Minister would be to assist Dr Mahathir in formulating the 1999 Budget.

"We know that Dr Mahathir is not only an expert in financial matters but in various fields as well.

"There is no leader in the world who is as knowledgeable as Dr Mahathir on economic and financial matters ... he calls the shots and I have to assist him," he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur yesterday after launching a pizza outlet called Beverlyhills Pizza.

"I am lucky to have guidance. My work will be made much easier," he added.

However, Mustapa said he would need to understand the current economic scenario where "a quick and right decision is crucial to salvage the economy."

Besides being the Second Finance Minister, Mustapa also maintains his Entrepreneur Development portfolio.

He said he may have to reduce field assignments and delegate certain responsibilities to his deputy, Datuk Idris Jusoh.

Bername reports: The Malay Chamber of Commerce of Malaysia yesterday welcomed the appointments of Datuk Mustapa Mohamed as Second Finance Minister and Tan Sri Ali Abdul Hassan Sulaiman as Bank Negara Governor, saying they were the right choice for the job.

Its president Syed Amin Al-Jeffri said the Government had selected the appropriate candidates based on their wide experience in the country's financial management system.

He also hailed the decision by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to retain Mustapa as the Entrepreneur Development Minister.

By holding the two portfolios, Mustapa will be in a better position to help small-and medium-scale entrepreneurs who have been badly-hit by the economic slowdown, he said.

Being the Second Finance Minister, Mustapa has the authority to ensure speedier disbursement of funds to Bumiputera businessmen to re-start their businesses.

In Kota Baru, Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat welcomed Mustapa's appointment, saying Mustapa has proven his ability to resolve problems faced by the people.

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