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Singapore-editorial

ABDULLAH CAN HELP RESTORE STABILITY

SINGAPORE, Jan 13 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's appointment as Malaysia's new Deputy Prime Minister should help to restore stability undermined by the sacking of his predecessor, said the Straits Times.

In its editorial today, the Singapore main daily said Abdullah was no political lightweight despite criticisms that he was a "safe choice" who would not challenge Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"The new deputy premier, who enjoys a clean reputation and who honed his skills at statesmanship when he was Foreign Minister, could hardly have beaten two veteran politicians - Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and former Finance Minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah - to his new job had he been a political lightweight," it said.

The editorial said Abdullah was well-positioned to restore the public image of the Home Ministry after the beating of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim while in police custody.

Abdullah was also handed the Home Ministry portfolio relinquished by Dr Mahathir in last Friday's reshuffle of the Malaysian Cabinet.

The newspaper also hailed as "significant" the return of Tun Daim Zainuddin as Finance Minister.

"Though he is no stranger to controversy, there are those who regard him as the country's most capable economic manager, perhaps since independence. It is certainly true that he was instrumental in pulling Malaysia out of the last recession.

"His first-hand experience of those trying times gives him the ability to make a difference in his new post. Expectations being high, those interested in Malaysia's recovery will be watching him avidly," it added.

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