

14/12/1999

It's back to basics, says Musa

Ainon Mohd

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Newly-appointed Education Minister Senator Tan Sri Musa Mohamad gave his undertaking today to study problems related to education and try to resolve them.

Musa, 56, a former Universiti Sains Malaysia vice-chancellor said the problems were those related to planning and implementation of educational programmes and policies.

He took his oath of office as Senator today before Dewan Negara deputy president Datuk Michael Chen Wing Sum and will take over from Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak who moves back to the Ministry of Defence.

"We may have to go back to basics and from there charter strategies for the future. I am looking at education in total. However, any possible changes to existing policies will require consideration and in-depth discussions."

Describing his new post as a very challenging job, Musa said he believed that he was not appointed to neutralise any party but to give professional input to the education system.

Musa said he would also study whether it was true that all undergraduates were against the Government.

"If this is true then we need a specific strategy to counter this problem and to ensure that they concentrate on their studies."

When asked on his political plans and whether he would join any political party, Musa, a non-political figure, said his plans at the moment were to work out something "meaningful" for the next three years. (Senators serve a maximum two consecutive three-year terms).

"What happens after that we will see... right now on whether I will join politics or not, the answer is no," he said, but adding that this could change in the future.

On whether he was an Umno member or belonged to any other party, Musa said he did not belong to any party.

Musa was a former chairman of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and a member of the Mara Higher Advisory Council on Educational Matters.

From 1982 to 1995, he was the Vice-Chancellor of USM before opting for early retirement.

Also sworn in as Senator was Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paduka Dr Abdul Hamid Othman.

They are scheduled to take their oath of office before the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah at Istana Negara tomorrow.

Their appointments as Ministers in the new Federal Cabinet were announced recently by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Abdul Hamid said he would face an uphill task to counter Pas' influence but expected big changes to be made immediately in the handling of Islamic administration in the country. This, he said, was generally to bring back on course Muslims who were influenced by wrong interpretations of Islam.

(END)