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Do your best, says Abdullah

Kamarul Yunus

DEPUTY Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday congratulated Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaakob, Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir and Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia on their appointment as new Cabinet ministers.

"I congratulate the new ministers and hope they will carry out their responsibilities to the best of their ability," he told reporters in Petaling Jaya yesterday after launching Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's book entitled "A New Deal For Asia".

The comments were his first since the Prime Minister announced a minor Cabinet reshuffle last week.

Under the Cabinet reshuffle, Mohd Khalil, who was Pahang Menteri Besar, is now Information Minister replacing Datuk Mohamed Rahmat while Abdul Kadir, who was Deputy Home Minister, replaces Datuk Seri Sabbaruddin Chik as Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister. Both Mohamed and Sabbaruddin tendered their resignations two weeks before the announcement.

Pandikar Amin, meanwhile, replaces Datuk Chong Kah Kiat as Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

Chong had vacated his post to concentrate on the Sabah state election in March. The three new ministers will be take their oath of office before the Yang Di Pertuan Agong today.

Bernama reports: Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia were sworn in as senators yesterday.

The swearing-in ceremony was held before Dewan Negara president Tan Sri Mohamed Ya'acob at the outset of the Dewan Negara sitting.

Khalil has also been appointed as Umno secretary-general, replacing Sabbaruddin who also resigned from the post.

Later, when met by reporters at the lobby of Parliament house, Khalil thanked the Prime Minister for his trust in him.

"I appreciate the appointment by the Prime Minister and the move to the federal level to join the Cabinet," he said.

Khalil was Minister in the Prime Minister's Department for two years from July 14 1984 before being appointed the eighth Pahang Menteri Besar on August 14 1986.

He also served as Deputy Education Minister from April 29 1982.

"I have only now been appointed senator, so for further comments, let me first take my oath of office (as minister) tomorrow," he said when asked to comment about his appointment.

Asked further on the matter, he said that he would need to meet and have a discussion with Mohamed on plans for the ministry.

"I have ideas for the ministry but I feel it is appropriate for me to first be briefed and to have a discussion with the officers to get the overall picture on the role of the ministry," he said.

On his post as Umno secretary-general, Khalil said that he would continue to contribute his services to the party in line with the responsibility placed in him.

On his general plan to be implemented on assuming the post in the party, he said: "I do have a general plan but give me some time in this initial stage to see what I feel should be implemented."

Khalil was also asked to comment on the appointment of state executive councillor Datuk Adnan Yaakob as the Pahang Menteri Besar instead of Deputy Menteri Besar Datuk Hasan Ariffin.

"The appointment is made by the leadership and posts to be assumed in the government will involve appointments. I believe the Prime Minister has given due consideration over the matter. It is within his power and prerogative," he said.

Meanwhile, Pandikar Amin, when met by reporters, said that he had not been informed of his portfolio.

He thanked the Prime Minister for his appointment and pledged to give his best in the discharge of his duties.

Asked whether his appointment has to do with the Barisan National's victory in the recent state election, he said: "Whether or not the BN's success in Sabah is a factor in my appointment, I do not know. Only the PM knows."

Pandikar Amin, who is president of Akar, a BN component party, said that his appointment reflected the political inclination of Dr Mahathir who provides an opportunity to groups, however small, to play a role in nation-building.

"This appointment is not only a recognition for Akar, a small party, but also the people of Sabah," said Pandikar Amin, leader of the Iranun community in Sabah.

In the state election, Pandikar Amin agreed not to be fielded in the Tempasuk state constituency to give way to an Umno candidate, who successfully contested the seat.

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