

16/12/1999

Fulfil promises, Cabinet told (HL)

Patrick Sennyah; Audrey Edwards

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Work hard to fulfil the Barisan Nasional election pledges as soon as possible, understand the people, talk to them and improve their quality of life.

These were the instructions given by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to his ministers - new and old - when he chaired the first meeting of the new Cabinet at Putrajaya today.

Several ministers, contacted by the New Straits Times after the meeting, said Dr Mahathir urged them to work hard and ensure the wishes of the rakyat, especially the younger generation, were understood and fulfilled.

They said he had also asked them to be trustworthy and efficient and to ensure that the Government delivered what it had promised the people.

Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn, who is one of the nine new ministers, said Dr Mahathir told them to maintain good relations with each other and to steer the country to greater heights as a team.

Agriculture Minister Datuk Effendi Norwawi said the Prime Minister had made it very clear that he wanted the ministers to push ahead towards achieving Vision 2020.

"He wants us to continue with the Barisan Nasional's task to take the country to greater heights and for each of us, old and new, to play our roles as effectively as possible," he said.

Other new faces in the Cabinet are Tan Sri Bernard Dompok and Datuk Rais Yatim, both ministers in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Ong Ka Ting (Housing and Local Government), Datuk Nazri Abdul Aziz (Entrepreneur Development), Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein (Youth and Sports), Datuk Azmi Khalid (Rural Development) and Tan Sri Musa Mohamad (Education).

Musa and Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman were sworn in as senators last Monday to enable them to become ministers.

Azmi said Dr Mahathir had asked ministers to declare their assets and maintain a clean image.

Ong said the ministers were asked to identify the weaknesses in their ministries and work towards overcoming them.

"The Prime Minister also asked us to work towards improving the people's quality of life, both in the urban and rural areas," he said. Dr Mahathir had also urged the ministers to pay equal attention to preserving the environment.

Dr Mahathir announced his new Cabinet last Friday. Yesterday, he led the ministers and deputy ministers to take the oaths of office, loyalty and secrecy before the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah at Istana Negara.

Before chairing the meeting at 9.30am today, Dr Mahathir, clad in a dark suit, led the ministers to a group photograph. Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Abdul Halim Ali also attended the meeting.

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