

24 MAY 1999

Senate-Swearingin

KHALIL AND PANDIKAR AMIN SWORN IN AS SENATORS

KUALA LUMPUR, May 24 (Bernama) -- Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia were sworn in as senators today.

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

Khalil took his oath of office first.

Khalil and Pandikar Amin will then be able to assume their duties as ministers as announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in a Cabinet reshuffle on Thursday.

Khalil, 61, formerly Pahang Menteri Besar, has been appointed Information Minister while Pandikar Amin, 46, has been appointed Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

Their appointments followed the resignation of Datuk Mohamed Rahmat as Information Minister early this month and Datuk Chong Kah Kiat as Minister in the Prime Minister's Department in February to contest the Sabah election.

In the reshuffle, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir also replaces Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik who resigned as Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister.

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 to rejoin the Cabinet.

"I appreciate the appointment by the prime minister and furthermore, given the trust to 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 Aug 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 of his plans as minister and the important post in the party.

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

"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 let 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 the prerogative of the prime minister," 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.

-- BERNAMA

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