

08 JAN 1999

Mahathir-DPM

PAK LAH NAMED DPM, DAIM RE-APPOINTED FINANCE MINISTER

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 8 (Bernama) -- Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has been appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced the appointment after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting at the party headquarters here this evening.

He also announced the re-appointment of Tun Daim Zainuddin as Finance Minister.

Defence Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar succeeds Abdullah as Foreign Minister while Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha takes over the defence portfolio.

Deputy Minister of Home Affairs Datuk Tajol Rosli Ghazali is promoted to full minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

Dr Mahathir also announced several other minor changes involving deputy ministers.

He said the appointments would take effect after the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong grants his consent.

Abdullah, 59, succeeds Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim who was sacked from the Cabinet on Sept 2 on moral grounds.

Since then, pressure had been mounting on Dr Mahathir to appoint a deputy so that there would not be any vacuum should anything happen to him.

Dr Mahathir had earlier stated that in order to be fair to all, he preferred to wait until after the party elections in June before naming a new DPM.

Abdullah, one of Umno's three vice-presidents, was seen as one of the strong contenders for the post. The others were Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who is also a vice-president, and former Finance Minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. (The third Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib has been on leave to sort out personal legal problems).

While Abdullah's promotion to DPM is not surprising, his appointment as Home Affairs Minister is seen to be a significant move as the powerful portfolio had always been under Dr Mahathir himself.

The appointment is seen as a mark of confidence in Abdullah, a former bureaucrat turned politician who hails from a well-respected family of religious and political leaders in Pulau Pinang.

The re-appointment of Daim, 60, to the post which he relinquished in 1991 after steering the country out of the mid-80's recession, is not surprising.

This is especially so when he was brought back to the Cabinet as Special Functions Minister last year to help tackle the current round of economic slowdown.

The finance portfolio, previously under Anwar for seven years, was taken over by Dr Mahathir as First Finance Minister for five months before it was handed over again to Daim.

Syed Hamid's appointment as foreign minister is a promotion as Malaysia has played a significant role in the international arena since Abdullah held the post.

His experience in the defence will continue to help Malaysia in the forefront at the international level particularly as Malaysia is a member of the United Nations Security Council beginning this year.

For Abang Abu Bakar, his appointment as Defence Minister is a homecoming of sorts as he was deputy minister in that ministry for almost 10 years from 1981.

The announcement of new appointments is definitely a Hari Raya present for Senator Datuk Ibrahim Ali and Member of Parliament for Chenderoh, Datuk Nazri Aziz, both of whom were named deputy ministers.

Ibrahim has been assigned to the Prime Minister's Department and Nazri, the Finance Ministry.

Ibrahim takes over from Datuk Ibrahim Saad who has moved to the Transport Ministry while Nazri replaces Datuk Affifuddin Omar who will be serving the Human Resources Ministry.

Deputy Transport Minister Datuk Mohamad Ali Rustam takes over from Deputy Health Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman who has moved to the Prime Minister's Department.

Deputy Human Resource Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir has taken over Tajol Rosli's portfolio.

Dr Mahathir also announced that Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed retains his portfolio and Daim also remains as Special Functions Minister.

-- BERNAMA