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Mahathir-Criteria

VARIOUS CRITERIA USED TO PICK CABINET LINE-UP, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 10 (Bernama) -- Various criteria are used to pick the Cabinet line-up and other government administration members, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The performance of ministers in the previous Cabinet as well as the performance of the component parties of the Barisan Nasional (BN) in the Nov 29 general election were also assessed, he said.

Dr Mahathir said he also needed to ensure balance between the BN component parties, the states and the gender aspect too.

"Quite a lot have to be taken into consideration," he said when asked of the criteria used to pick Cabinet members.

"It was quite difficult to get the names. That was why it was a little late (the announcement)."

Dr Mahathir, the BN chairman, said after announcing the Cabinet line-up and other government administration members here today that he had to take into account all aspects in making his choice.

Two new faces in the Cabinet are Agriculture Minister Datuk Mohamed Effendi Norwawi and Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad.

Datuk Rais Yatim, a former Information Minister and Foreign Minister, has been appointed Minister in the Prime Minister's Department and Tan Sri Bernard Dompok is back to his Minister in the Prime Minister's Department post.

Deputy Ministers promoted to Ministers are Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein (Youth and Sports), Datuk Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz (Entrepreneur Development), Datuk Azmi Khalid (Rural Development), Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn (Human Resources) and Datuk Ong Ka Ting (Housing and Local Government).

Johor is represented by six Ministers, Perak (4), Kedah (3), Sabah (3), Sarawak (3), Pahang (3), Pulau Pinang (2), Negeri Sembilan (1), Perlis (1) and Melaka (1).

Terengganu and Kelantan have no representative in the new Cabinet.

The breakdown according to component parties shows Umno has 16 Ministers, MCA (4), MIC (1), Gerakan (1), Akar (1), UPKO (1), PBDS (1), SUPP (1) and PBB (1).

On Terengganu and Kelantan being unrepresented in the Cabinet, Dr Mahathir said both states have no vacancy in the Dewan Negara.

While representatives from the two states would be appointed from among Senate members, Dr Mahathir said he would have to wait until there is a vacancy before the appointments could be considered.

In the Nov 29 general election, BN failed to win any parliamentary seat in Terengganu while in Kelantan, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah was the only BN victor, winning the Gua Musang parliamentary seat.

On the reduction in the number of women Ministers from three to two, Dr Mahathir said: "I regret very much that I cannot have three. I had wanted to have three or more but it is not possible".

The two women Ministers are National Unity and Social Development Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman and Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.

Siti Zaharah, previously Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, took over from Datin Paduka Zaleha Ismail who has been dropped.

Asked if Umno vice president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak was moved from Education to Defence in view of his slim 241-vote winning majority for the Pekan parliamentary seat in the general election, Dr Mahathir replied: "No".

"It is because we want to have a new (Education) minister drawn from outside," he said in referring to Tan Sri Musa Mohamad, the former Universiti Sains Malaysia vice-chancellor who was named the new Education Minister.

As to why Tengku Razaleigh was not appointed, Dr Mahathir said: "We make the choices (on the appointments) based on the criteria I mentioned just now".

Asked if any BN component party had requested for additional representations, he said only Gerakan was given an additional Parliamentary Secretary's post.

On MCA secretary-general Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh being dropped, Dr Mahathir said it was the MCA's decision.

Datuk Ong Ka Ting took over from Ting as Housing and Local Government Minister.

Dr Mahathir said he would direct all ministers to declare their assets to him.

"I have ways and means," he said when asked if he was going to ensure a more systematic way of declaring assets.

-- BERNAMA

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