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Cabinet-Reaction

VARIOUS QUARTERS WELCOME NEW CABINET LINE-UP

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 10 (Bernama) -- Various quarters including menteri besar and chief ministers as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) today welcomed the new cabinet line-up described as a strong team capable of leading the country towards greater heights in the new millennium.

They also said that the combination of new and old faces in the cabinet was capable of assisting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in facing the challenges in developing the country.

In Pulau Pinang, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon in congratulating Dr Mahathir said the new line-up is a combination of old leaders with the experience and new leaders who have the necessary expertise.

He also congratulated the nine new ministers especially former Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Musa Mohamad who has been named as Education Minister.

"Although Musa's appointment was unexpected, it is appropriate as he has the experience and expertise as Vice Chancellor which can be applied in handling issues on education in the country."

The National Union of Teaching Profession (NUTP) said Musa's appointment was appropriate and timely because the country's education system needs a professional academician who is not bound by any political party to lead the ministry in the new millennium.

Its secretary-general N. Siva Subramaniam said the appointment reflected Dr. Mahathir's determination to realise the country's aspiration to become the regional centre of educational excellence.

The Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) hoped that newly appointed Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn would continue to maintain the policy of developing good tri-partite relations between the government, workers and employers to preserve industrial harmony in the country.

MTUC president Zainal Rampak said Fong had a lot to learn in handling labour and manpower problems as he has had no experience in the field.

He hoped Fong could continue with the policy of holding the tri-partite dialogue implemented through the National Labour Advisory Council (NLAC) which is represented by the government, employers and employees to discuss common issues.

In MELAKA, Chief Minister Datuk Mohamad Ali Rustam is confident that the new line-up would be able to bring the nation to greater heights in its own way.

He said the Cabinet line-up reflected Dr Mahathir's wisdom in selecting ministers and deputy ministers to help in developing the country.

In KANGAR, Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim was happy with the line-up and thanked Dr Mahathir on the appointment of Datuk Azmi Khalid as a cabinet minister because this is the first time that Perlis is represented by a full minister.

"The state government, Barisan Nasional and the people of Perlis are thankful for the appointment," he said.

In KUALA TERENGGANU, Menteri Besar Haji Abdul Hadi Awang in congratulating the new cabinet line-up, hoped the state and federal government could forge closer and stronger relations in the interest of the people.

Although Terengganu is not represented in the new cabinet, he was confident that the federal government could continue to foster cooperation with the state government through various ways.

"The absence of any representative from Terengganu and Kelantan in the new cabinet proves that the federal government recognises the PAS government in both states and respects the people's choice," he added.

In KOTA BAHARU, Kelantan Umno Liaison secretary Datuk Ahmad Shahibuddin Mohd Nor described the new line-up as an appreciation to the states and parties that contributed to the Barisan Nasional's (BN) victory in the 10th general election on Nov 29.

He said although Kelantan and Terengganu, which are governed by PAS, do not have any representative in the cabinet the people in the two states would not be neglected by the federal government.

In JOHOR BAHARU, Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the new line-up was an honour to the state because 11 of the 20 Members of Parliament from Johor have been appointed in various capacities in the administration.

Expressing his gratitude, he said Dr Mahathir had given a lot of room to the younger group from Johor to hold important positions in the administration.

In Sabah, Parti Maju Sabah (SAPP) leader Richard Yong said the appointment of Tan Sri Bernard Dompok as Minister in the Prime Minister's Department augurs well towards nation building and it also marks the return of the Kadazandusun community to the national mainstream.

"The greater role of Sabah in the federal government showed that the contribution of the Sabah BN in the recent elections is being acknowledged," he said in a statement.

Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan) vice president Marina Yusoff said she was not surprised but felt rather strange that Kelantan Umno Liaison head Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah was not included in the new cabinet line-up.

She said people who used to be "under" Ku Li in the now defunct Parti Semangat 46 (S46) such as Datuk Rais Yatim, Tengku Azlan Sultan Abu Bakar and Datuk Zainal Abidin Zin were listed in the new administration line-up but why was Ku Li excluded.

"This is a big slap on Ku Li and showed that Dr Mahathir still bears a grudge against Ku Li," she told BERNAMA here.

Former University of Malaya Vice-Chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Syed Hussein Alatas welcomed the appointment of Musa, his former counterpart at Universiti Sains Malaysia, as the new Education Minister.

He said the appointment showed that the prime minister recognised that the time had come to bring in academicians to help overcome the problems related to education in the country.

Dr Syed Hussein said in a number of countries, it was usual for academicians to be appointed to cabinet posts and he was happy that Malaysia was doing the same this time.

"In fact, academicians are playing a prominent role in government affairs in a number of other countries," he said.

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