

09 JAN 1999

Zaharah-Appointment

ZAHARAH EXPECTS TO GET PORTFOLIO RELATED TO WOMEN

KUANTAN, Jan 9 (Bernama) -- Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman who has been appointed a minister in the Prime Minister's Department said she expected to be given a portfolio related to women's affairs.

"I don't know yet but the PM did mention about women's affairs to me yesterday," she told reporters on arrival at the Sultan Ahmad Shah airport, here.

She said she might also be involved in the economic agenda of the country which was currently undergoing recovery process under the leadership of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"I'm confident that resources available to women could be used to stimulate greater development and progress to the country," she said.

Siti Zaharah, who is also Wanita Umno leader, was appointed as Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (JPM) in a Cabinet reshuffle announced by Dr Mahathir after chairing the Umno Supreme Council (MT) meeting. Initially, she was announced as a Deputy Minister in the JPM but Dr Mahathir clarified this morning that Siti Zaharah was appointed as a minister.

Siti Zaharah, who served as a Deputy Minister in the JPM in 1986, described her appointment as a full minister as a sort of homecoming but with wider duties.

She said it was also a welcome new year gift to her and to Wanita Umno.

Siti Zaharah said the increase in the number of women minister showed that the Prime Minister took note of the struggle of women for the country.

Two other women ministers are Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and Datin Paduka Zaleha Ismail.

On the MT's decision not to hold party election at the next Umno general assembly, she said it was made in the interest of the country and stability of the party.

"National development is important and we must focus on general election, current issues and restoring confidence of the people in national leadership," he said.

--BERNAMA

ROS ABG