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Ainum-Appointment

I'M VERY HAPPY TO BE A-G, SAYS AINUM

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 19 (Bernama) -- Datuk Ainum Mohd Saaid, named today as the new Attorney-General, said she is "very happy" with the appointment and will do her best in the interest of justice and fairness.

" It is a very pleasant appointment and I am very happy with it," said the first woman to be made the country's Public Prosecutor and legal adviser to the government.

Speaking to reporters hours after the Prime Minister's Office announced her appointment, Ainum thanked the government and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for the honour.

" It is certainly an expression of their confidence in me. I would try to do my utmost not to disappoint them," she told the news conference at the Securities Commission where she is Deputy Chief Executive before taking up the appointment on Jan 1.

For Ainum, 54, who hails from Ipoh, Perak, being appointed Attorney-General means going back to the place that she was attached to for 24 years before going on optional retirement in 1996.

She then joined the Securities Commission (SC) as Director of Market Supervision Division and later the private sector before returning to the SC last year as Deputy Chief Executive.

Asked if the appointment was a surprise, she said: " I'll be lying to you if I said I hadn't heard rumours about it in the recent past. I was informed about it not too long before it was confirmed."

Ainum said she also felt honoured to join some other women who were appointed to top posts in the country of late, including Datuk Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz, who was earlier this year made Governor of Bank Negara.

Asked if the appointment was a challenge to her as a woman, she said: " I feel the challenge is there whether you are a woman or a man. But I would really like people to think of me as a person, the fact that being a woman is incidental...I enjoy being a woman."

She was also asked about her reputation as a no-nonsense officer in both the SC and Attorney-General's Chambers and whether because of this, she would make a very tough A-G.

" I think I should be a reasonable person. A no-nonsense person can also be a compassionate person and kind."

Given the vast powers of the Attorney-General, including in deciding on who to prosecute and not to prosecute, how does she perceive the A-G should be ideally?

" As long as the A-G is seen to be discharging the duties in the interest of justice and fairness, I think that is the qualification of an A-G," she said.

Asked about the A-G's Chambers coming under criticisms of late, Ainum said such criticisms were a matter of perceptions and it would be premature for her to say more on the matter.

She said the A-G's Chambers had done its best and there would naturally be some negative perceptions like any other government departments.

Ainum said she was looking forward to her work and to working with what she described as as a team of excellent prosecutors.

They include Solicitor-General Datuk Heliliah Yusof, the secondmost senior officer at the A-G's Chambers, who is an old friend and ex-school-mate.

Another good start for her is that Bar Council President Sulaiman Abdullah is a personal friend who was one year her senior at the Singapore University where they were law students.

" I know his wife very well and I think of course with such relationship, it will help in the long run to improve relations with the

Bar Council," she said.

To another question on whether the A-G's Chambers would now be more transparent, she said she would try to be as accessible to the media and transparent as she could.

Ainum said during her stint with the SC, she was able to help in strengthening the legal framework in which corporate governance could flourish and to improve existing corporate laws.

" It is an ongoing process and when I go to the A-G's Chambers I would be carrying part of this work with me so that I can develop on that area."

Answering another question, she also expressed hope that she could do something to help improve laws pertaining to women.

She cited an example the plight of Muslim women which relevant women organisations had complained of over the years, especially pertaining to the lengthy process they had to go through in the Syariah Court to seek justice.

" It's not my jurisdiction as Attorney-General but if there is anything I could do to help in my free time and outside my official scope of work, I will certainly do so," she added.

-- BERNAMA

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