

Gani appointed as Attorney-General

Bt 20 NOV 2001

DATUK Abdul Gani Patail, head of the prosecution division of the Attorney-General's Chambers, has been appointed Malaysia's new Attorney-General.

He succeeds Datuk Seri Ainum Mohd Saaid whose resignation, for health reasons, was accepted by the Government yesterday, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said in Putrajaya.

"The appointment takes effect on January 1 but Abdul Gani will assume the duties of

the Attorney-General once Ainum goes on leave soon," he told a news conference at his office.

"The Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) has agreed to Datuk Gani Patail taking over the duties of Attorney-General from Ainum," Rais said.

The Government agreed to accept Ainum's resignation with effect from yesterday, he pointed out.

Ainum made history when she became the first woman to be appointed the country's At-

torney-General on January 1 this year.

In September, she went on medical leave for a long-standing thyroid problem.

Ainum told reporters last week that her health was still not good but she was trying to manage the situation.

Rais said Ainum had cited in her letter of resignation health reasons that prevented her from continuing with her heavy responsibilities as A-G.

The A-G is the country's Public Prosecutor who also has

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the sole discretion over prosecutions and charges.

The minister said Ainum first indicated her intention to resign a few months ago.

Gani, 46, who hails from Sabah, is a law graduate of the University of Malaya. He has been head of prosecution since 1991 and has also served as head of the Advisory and International Division as well as Law Revision Commissioner.

When contacted, Gani declined comments on his appointment, saying he would do so today.

Rais expressed confidence that Gani would discharge his duties as the new A-G effectively and efficiently, and that he would always uphold the rule of law.

He said the Government would also like to express its gratitude to Ainum for her

"sterling services as A-G for the past year and believed that her vast experience in the legal field would be needed from time to time.

The minister said Dr Mahathir has agreed to the succession arrangement and that the Government would continue with the current format of legal service and administration.

On whether Gani has been informed of the appointment, Rais said this was a routine administrative matter which will be followed up by the Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsudin Osman.

"I have met him (Gani) and Datuk Seri Ainum has also met me this (Monday) morning to deliver the envelope containing the resignation letter. The letter was handed over to the KSN (Samsudin)," he said.

Ainum would need a few

days to clear up a few things before going on leave, Dr Rais added.

"I did request that she facilitate a handing-over note to Datuk Gani so that the rest of the staff, at least the top-level staff at the A-G Chambers, would be in the position to continue with business as usual and take care of all the matters which are before the courts, as well as administrative and legal matters," he said.

Asked about Ainum's thyroid condition, Rais said that is personal matter.

"She has been suffering from it for some months now. I would say for the last three or four months, her illness has become rather noticeable and I am sure it has been hard on her," he said.

Asked whether Ainum was "pressured" to resign, he said:

"I am telling you now that such speculations are baseless... I interact with her every week".

On the position of Solicitor-General Datuk Heliliah Mohamed Yusof, the second most senior person in the A-G Chambers, he said: "She's not retiring yet, so let's not go into that. She's still there and Datuk Heliliah is doing the job. We will not speculate".

Asked about a suggestion by the DAP that appointing a minister as A-G would improve accountability to the Parliament, Rais said it does not make much difference.

"The A-G is firstly the legal adviser to the Government, and he or she is also the chief prosecutor of the land. Whatever he or she does, the Government has to be informed and the minister concerned could always speak up in Parliament." - Bernama