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Cabinet-Reaction

NEWLY APPOINTED MINISTERS, DEPUTY MINISTERS URGED TO CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 17 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today called on the newly appointed ministers, deputy ministers and parliamentary secretary to contribute positively towards implementing government policies.

"For those appointed as ministers, I believe they have the role and contributions needed for any new policies to be implemented from time to time," he said before chairing the Umno management committee here.

He was asked to comment on the appointment of Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil as the Women's Affairs Minister and Malaysian Islamic Advancement Department (Jakim) Director-General Brig Jen (Rtd) Datuk Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin as Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

Umno executive secretary Senator Datuk Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor has been made Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department while People's Progressive Party (PPP) president Senator Datuk M.Kayveas is appointed Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister.

Veteran journalist and Utusan Melayu (Malaysia) Berhad deputy executive chairman Senator Datuk Zainuddin Maidin is appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Information Ministry.

Asked on the government's move to retain the tradition of appointing an ulama as the minister in charge of Islamic religious affairs, Abdullah said the appointment of Abdul Hamid is not merely to retain the tradition but was made on the basis that he is the Jakim Director-General.

"He surely know of the policies which has been firmly held by the government over any programmes to be implemented. Maybe he will propose other programmes which can be introduced," he said.

Meanwhile Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz is happy with Shahrizat's appointment as it showed that the women's struggle is given special attention.

"I thank the Prime Minister for recognising women's importance," she said while expressing the hope that more women would be appointed to the Cabinet.

Rafidah expressed her confidence that Shahrizat would be able to lead the ministry well with the experience gained through her interaction with non-governmental organisations.

Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin described the promotion of Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil to full minister a good move as it reflected the government's recognition of the role played by women in the country's affairs.

He said with Shahrizat's promotion to the post of Women's Affairs Minister, there would now be three women Cabinet ministers.

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

"The women (in the country) should be happy," he said when asked to comment on the latest Cabinet reshuffle.

Tun Daim also said many women had been appointed to senior positions in the government.

They include Bank Negara Governor Datuk Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz, Attorney-General Datuk Ainum Mohd Saaid, Solicitor-General Datuk Helilah Mohamed Yusof, National Archives Director-General Datuk Habibah Zon and National

Library Director-General Shahar Banun Jaafar.

In PENANG, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon welcomed the news on the creation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and said the Prime Minister's timely decision reflects the society's increased awareness of the plights and discrimination faced by women in workplace and at home.

In a statement released here, Koh said women's welfare must be given prominence by the public and among decision-makers.

Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman, who welcomed Abdul Hamid's appointment, expressed his confidence that the latter would be able to carry out his duties well.

He said Abdul Hamid's in-depth knowledge in Islam as the Jakim Director-General would enable him to shoulder responsibilities entrusted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Abdul Ghani told this to reporters after the "Wawancara" programme over RTM1 here tonight.

Abdul Ghani also welcomed the appointment of Sharizat as Women's Affairs Minister, Tengku Adnan (Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department), Kayveas (Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister) and Zainuddin (Information Ministry Parliamentary Secretary).

-- BERNAMA

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