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Abdullah-schedule

ABDULLAH SET TO HOLD KEY FINANCE PORTFOLIO

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 2 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is set to hold the key Finance portfolio in addition to Home Affairs when he officially begins his first day of work in Putrajaya as Prime Minister tomorrow.

Abdullah has a back-breaking schedule over the next week, attending one meeting after another with key administration officials and security personnel.

After reporting for work at the Prime Minister's office tomorrow, Abdullah will make an unprecedented address in Parliament to table a motion of thanks to former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Abdullah is expected to touch on Dr Mahathir's extensive contributions to the country over the past 22 years and also pledge to continue Dr Mahathir's successful policies.

Following this, Abdullah will have a closed-door meeting with all Members of Parliament (MPs) from the Barisan Nasional (BN) and the opposition. Aides said he will use the opportunity to urge the MPs to work together in the interest of the people and the country despite their political differences.

On Tuesday, he will chair a meeting of the National Security Council and the following day, his first Cabinet meeting as the Prime Minister.

Abdullah has scheduled a press conference after the Cabinet meeting where he is expected to outline key areas that the new administration will focus on.

On Thursday and Friday, Abdullah will separately meet the Umno and BN supreme councils. These highest decision-making bodies are expected to endorse Abdullah as Prime Minister and pledge their full support to him.

The 14-member BN will also endorse Abdullah as its chairman. Abdullah is acting Umno president following Dr Mahathir's retirement.

On Friday night, Abdullah will break the fast with members of the judiciary and the following Monday he will meet with all the top civil servants and heads of departments.

Abdullah's aides said that in all these meetings, the Prime Minister is expected to stress the importance of continuing the programmes initiated by Dr Mahathir to achieve Vision 2020.

He will also stress to all the parties -- the legislature, executive, judiciary, private and public sectors -- to make integrity, incorruptibility and efficiency a way of life.

His aides confirmed that Abdullah, who assumed the Finance portfolio when Dr Mahathir retired on Friday, will retain the post in addition to the Home Ministry for the immediate future.

Abdullah, who was sworn in as the country's fifth Prime Minister at Istana Negara on Friday, returned to Kuala Lumpur this evening after a two-day visit to Penang.

He had in his maiden speech as Prime Minister at a rousing welcome home ceremony at the old terminal at the Bayan Lepas international airport yesterday urged Malaysians "to work with me and not for me" as the Government aspires to bring the nation to greater heights.

-- BERNAMA

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