

07 JAN 2004

Abdullah-Muhyiddin

SENIOR MINISTER SHOULD HELM AGRICULTURE MINISTRY - ABDULLAH

PUTRAJAYA, Jan 7 (Bernama) -- The appointment of a senior minister to head the Agriculture Ministry bears testimony to the government's firm commitment to ensure the agriculture sector played a bigger role in mainstream development, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said the ministry would assume a lead role in developing and modernising the agricultural sector besides being responsible to encourage and promote programmes linked to agro-based small-and medium-scale industries.

"This means efforts to commercialise agricultural products will be done in a big way because we want to ensure the agriculture sector has new sources and growth areas, especially to increase sources of income for farmers and providing new sources of wealth for them.

"As such, I think it is a good idea to give the Agriculture Ministry to a senior minister," he told a media conference to announce a cabinet reshuffle.'

Abdullah announced the appointment of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin as Agriculture Minister at the media conference.

At the media conference, Abdullah also announced a cabinet reshuffle involving three ministries -- Finance, Agriculture and Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs -- and the appointment of a Special Functions Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

Second Finance Minister Datuk Dr Jamaludin Jarjis will take over Muhyiddin's portfolio as Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister while Agriculture Minister Datuk Dr Mohd Effendi Norwawi was named Special Functions Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

On the job specifications of the Special Functions Minister, Abdullah said he would discuss further with Dr Effendi.

"About the duties of the Special Functions Minister, I will discuss

further with Datuk Dr Effendi Norwawi, especially with regard to the many special projects that are to be carried out which need to be given attention in its implementation and coordination," he said.

The post of Special Functions Minister in the Prime Minister's Department was last held by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad between June 5, 2001 and Oct 31, 2003.

Prior to that, former Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin served in the post from Dec 14, 1999 to June 1, 2001.

-- BERNAMA

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