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Musa appoints Ongkili as Science and Technology adviser

KOTA KINABALU, Wed. - Newly-appointed Chief Minister Datuk Musa Aman has named Parti Bersatu Sabah deputy president Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili as his Science and Technology adviser.

The appointment came a day after Musa had promised that the PBS, as a major partner in the State Barisan Nasional, would be given suitable and relevant roles in the State administration.

Although the second-largest component of the State BN after Umno, the PBS was not included in the new State Cabinet sworn in yesterday, as Musa had opted for minimal change.

There had been much anticipation that the PBS, which rejoined the BN early last year, would be included in Musa's Cabinet.

Ongkili's appointment is seen as the beginning of the PBS participation in the State administration.

Musa said he appointed Ongkili, who is Bandau MP and Tandek Assemblyman, as he is Sabah's sole representative in the National Information Technology Council under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said he would discuss the terms of Ongkili's appointment with the State Secretary.

Musa said this at a Press conference after chairing his first Cabinet meeting since assuming the Chief Ministership on March 27.

Musa said he briefed the Cabinet on the direction of his administration and his priorities as the new Chief Minister, and asked for their full co-operation.

His key focus will be on developing agriculture, tourism and manufacturing, while continuing efforts to combat illegal immigration, illegal logging and fish bombing.

Musa's predecessor Datuk Chong Kah Kiat, who was retained in the Cabinet as Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister, had been tasked with continuing the effort against the problems of illegal immigration, logging and fish bombing, prioritised under his administration.

The State Security Working Committee, under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister, will deal with the illegal immigrants issue.

Musa said the State Government would continue with the "Ops Nyah" launched in February last year to demolish squatter houses and deport illegal immigrants.

He said local squatters whose houses were demolished or destroyed by fire would be resettled.

"We are looking at building between 5,000 and 10,000 units of low-cost housing for them," Musa said.

The Cabinet recorded its appreciation to Chong and Datuk Abdul Ghapur Salleh for their contribution to the development of the State while serving as Chief Minister and Minister in the Chief Minister's Department respectively, between March 2001 and March 2003.

Ghapur, who is Kalabakan Assemblyman and Tawau Umno division chief, was not re-appointed to the new State Cabinet. Meanwhile, Ongkili today pledged to give his best as Science and Technology advisor to the Chief Minister.

"Science and Technology is a dynamic field and close to my heart as an agriculture scientist and economist," said Ongkili who holds a doctorate in Agriculture Economics.

Ongkili, contacted at his Bandau parliamentary constituency office in Kota Marudu, expressed gratitude to Chief Minister Datuk Musa Aman for the appointment.

"I look forward to contributing to the Science and Technology field on behalf of the PBS," he said.

Ongkili said the PBS had a lot of talents in various fields that could be put to good use.