

**Kit Siang : new cabinet sends mixed signals**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**Mar 18, 2008**

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's new cabinet line-up has sent mixed signals - that the premier is starting to 'hear the truth from the people' as well as returning to the old politics of patronage. MCPX

This is the assessment by opposition leader Lim Kit Siang on the names revealed by the premier this afternoon.

zaid ibrahimLim also welcomed the 'surprise appointment' of Zaid Ibrahim as minister in the Prime Minister's Department with the portfolio of legal affairs.

"This will be most significant as it reflects a belated commitment to institute far-reaching judicial reforms to restore confidence in the independence, integrity and quality of the judiciary," he said in a statement.

muhammad muhd taibHowever, the DAP supremo was not enthusiastic about the appointment of Umno information chief Muhammad Muhd Taib as minister for rural and regional development.

He said this signified a return to the old politics of patronage, "completely at variance with Abdullah's pledge 42 months ago to lead a clean, incorruptible and trustworthy government."

**Time is not on their side**

The veteran politician also commended Abdullah's decision to relinquish one - internal security - of the two key portfolios held by the premier.

abdullah ahmad badawi 2008 cabinet line up 180308 03Describing this as a development in the right direction, Lim said it was clear that Abdullah was unable to do justice to the treble responsibilities of prime minister, internal security minister and finance minister.

The opposition leader also expressed hope that the new ministers appointed to key ministries will also have an equal commitment to "hear the truth from the people and initiate reforms in their respective jurisdictions."

Lim cited Syed Hamid Albar (home affairs and internal security minister), Ahmad Shabery Cheek (information minister), Abdul Shahrir Samad (domestic trade and consumer affairs minister), Khaled Nordin (higher education minister), Dr Rais Yatim (foreign minister) and Azalina Othman Said (tourism minister).

"Time however is not on the side of the new cabinet," warned Lim. "The political tsunami of March 8 does not give to the new cabinet the luxury of the usual political honeymoon for a new cabinet such as the conventional first 100 days for a new government or new cabinet."

"One clear message from the March 8 election results is the pent-up demand for reform after 50 years of disappointment and disillusionment at the lack of meaningful changes in the country," he added.

## **Overall reforms**

lim kit siang dap pc 130208 seriousLim further said that all the cabinet ministers whether new or old in new or previous ministries have less than two months to present an overall national programme of reform in conformity with the national verdict for change in the March 8 election results when Parliament reconvenes for its first meeting in May.

He outlined the reforms as:

- Far-reaching judicial reforms to restore a world-class judiciary.
- A first-world Parliament with wide-ranging parliamentary reforms including having an opposition MP to head the Public Accounts Committee and a full select committee system where every ministry is shadowed by a select committee.
- The creation of an efficient, incorruptible, professional world-class police service with the immediate establishment of an Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission (IPCMC) as recommended by the Royal Police Commission.
- Restoration of the independence, professionalism and impartiality of important institutions of state whether civil service, the Attorney-General's Chambers, the Anti-Corruption Agency, etc.
- Establishment of world-class education system at all levels distinguished by educational quality, excellence and meritocracy.
- A just, efficient, progressive economic policy which closes the gap between the rich and the poor and enhances Malaysia's international competitiveness to face the challenges of globalisation.

"The March 8 general election has removed the Barisan Nasional's hitherto unbroken two-thirds parliamentary majority, creating a more balanced and healthier Parliament," said Lim.

He also pointed out that without parliamentary secretaries, the 27 ministers should start a new political culture of placing their parliamentary accountability as among their top responsibilities, eradicating the undesirable past practice of ministers playing truant from Parliament.

Lim said Abdullah himself should set an example by instituting a weekly prime minister's question time where he appears in Parliament in person to lead the government in parliamentary accountability as is the norm in first-world developed countries.