

28 ministers, 40 deputies sworn in
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Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin led the newly appointed cabinet ministers and deputy ministers in taking their oath of office before Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin at Istana Negara this morning.

The ceremony at Balairong Seri Istana Negara started at 9.30am with Muhyiddin receiving his letter of appointment and this was followed by other ministers.

The deputy ministers were the last of the lot to be sworn in. The ceremony ended at about 11.20am.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and his wife Rosmah Mansor were present to witness the ceremony. Also present were Raja Pemaissuri Agong Tuanku Nur Zahirah and former prime ministers Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The two ex-PMs, who had a public and bitter spat, were seated close to each other.

After taking the oath of office, loyalty and confidentiality, the ministers and the deputies signed the instrument of appointment, witnessed by Court of Appeal president Alauddin Mohd Sheriff and chief secretary to the Government Mohd Sidek Hassan.

Najib, took over as the prime minister from Abdullah last Friday, had yesterday named 28 ministers and 40 deputies to his cabinet.

Former trade minister Muhyiddin, who was elected deputy leader of Umno at party polls last month, was also given the education portfolio.

The Trade Ministry is now headed by Mustapa Mohamad, a trained economist. His deputy is Mukhriz Mahathir, the son of former prime minister Mahathir.

Najib still under pressure from opposition

Khoo Kay Peng, an independent political analyst, told AFP that Najib has to implement democratic reform to regain public trust and woo foreign investment.

"Definitely there is no honeymoon for Najib. They (Malaysians) perceive him as a controversial leader," he said, adding that the new PM "has to do more than just rhetoric."

Khoo said Najib remained under pressure by opposition attempts to link him with corruption and the murder of a Mongolian woman who was the mistress of a close associate of the premier.

The analyst also warned that investors would be deterred if he failed to carry out pledges made when he was sworn into power, including revamping the graft-ridden Umno.

Veteran opposition leader Lim Kit Siang criticised the new cabinet, saying it was "dominated by old faces, old ideas and old approaches rejected by Malaysians" in last year's elections.

"This does not speak well for the government's commitment to accountability and democracy. The Najib cabinet is not a forward-looking and visionary cabinet which hopes to inspire Malaysians," he said in a statement.

Ku Li: neat and capable cabinet

Meanwhile, former finance minister and ex-Umno vice-president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah described the new cabinet as neat and capable of regaining BN's lost support.

"The previous cabinet is not that neat. We shall see how the new cabinet performs...

"I truly hope that the new leadership will be able to change things for the better," he was quoted as saying in Bernama.

The Gua Musang member of parliament also said that the new cabinet would be able to strengthen the country's economy despite the current global economic downturn.

The new leadership should be given the opportunity to bring changes, he added.

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