

PM: Successor shares my Vision 2020 views

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday assured local and international businessmen that his successor shares his views and hopes regarding Vision 2020.

This, he indicated, is evident from the tone of his successor's speeches.

"By the noise he has been making, I think he understands (the need for continuity in government policy on Vision 2020)," Dr Mahathir said when fielding questions from participants at an international trade and investment conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

He did not name the person he referred to as his "successor". Following the resignation of Encik Ghafar Baba as Deputy Prime Minister before the Umno elections early this month, the Prime Minister has yet to fill the vacancy. Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is now deputy president of Umno, the dominant party in the BN coalition, a position tradi-

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tionally linked with the country's deputy premiership.

Institute of Strategic and International Studies Director-General Datuk Dr Noordin Sopiee, who chaired the dialogue between Dr Mahathir and the participants, said: "I'm sure our Malaysian audience here was listening to that answer very closely, because every word has its meaning".

During the hour-long dialogue, Dr Mahathir fielded questions on the country's aspiration to become a developed nation by 2020; the Government's foreign policies vis-a-vis trading blocs and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec);

the Philippines' claim on Sabah; Malaysia as a centre of excellence on education; the country's trade unions and industrial relations; interest rates and inflation; and the implementation of Islamic financial system to run parallel with the country's conventional financial system.

Responding to a query, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia believes in some of form governmental intervention in the markets when "absolutely necessary". This should be seen by investors as an "insurance". "It means the Government will look over your shoulder to ensure that you don't get hurt," he added.

The Prime Minister said

while the private sector is fond of saying they want deregulation, "they would run along to the Government and ask our help when they are in a jam".

On his absence from the Apec informal summit in Seattle this week, Dr Mahathir reiterated his belief that little can be achieved if the leaders meet only for a day.

"I hope they will succeed and enjoy the fruits of their success. But I honestly don't think the one-day meeting will resolve the many problems of the world today," he added.

Asked if he thinks Malaysia may face industrial unrest of the like that has caused the South Korean economy to slacken, Dr Mahathir said it is unlikely.

This is because Malaysian workers know that jobs are created by the Government, not trade unions, and that wages will not go up if the economy suffers as a result of industrial strikes and wage increases which are not accompanied by increases in productivity.