# DPM: No change to Dr M's policies

NST - 1 JUL 2002

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**PUTRAJAYA, Tues.** — Policies implemented by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad have served the nation well and there is no reason to change them when there is a change in leadership.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said this in reply to questions from fund managers here today. He added "the policies will remain as they have worked well.

"A change of policies for the sake of change just to reflect a new man is not something that I believe in. The policies have worked and good policies should be allowed to work."

The Bumiputeras would have to work hard and the government would continue to encourage them to be independent, to compete and not to depend on crutches. The emphasis on K-workers would would remain an important programme, he said.

Abdullah was clarifying reports on Dr Mahathir's anouncement to step down from all government and party posts, to local and foreign fund managers and investment bankers. The Prime Minister's Financial Advisor Tan Sri Nor Mohamad Yackop was also present at the meeting.

The Prime Minister made the announcement at the end of the Umno general assembly on June 22. A transition formula was worked out before he left for holiday overseas, unanimously supported by the Umno Supreme Council and Barisan Nasional leaders, according to which Dr Mahathir would remain Prime Minister and Umno president, Barisan Nasional chairman and Finance Minister until October next year upon which he would be succeeded by Abdullah.

Responding to a question on the appointment of a second Finance Minister, Abdullah said the Prime Minister had expressed his views that he preferred a "professional" and the Deputy Prime Minister said, "I fully support the Prime Minister's views."

Abdullah stressed: "Make no mistake, Dr Mahathir is in charge and he is Prime Minister until he resigns."

Replying to another question, the Deputy Prime Minister said foreign investments would continue to be encouraged. New areas and sectors would be identified as well as existing ones continuing to receive attention.

Biotechnology was among the areas that had recently come into focus. The government set up a Biotechnology committee chaired by Abdullah and with the vast potential that Malaysia had in this area it would certainly receive more attention. ICT, agriculture and tourism would become important industries in future.

In reply to a question on corporate governance and transparency which, the fund managers said had improved substantially in Malaysia, Abdullah assured that the government would continue to adhere to corporate governance and transparency.

"It is not a problem with us," he added.

On the economic model and whether the country would continue to depend on Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) or seek domestic sources, he said he did not anticipate a change as the government would continue to encourage foreign investments.

With the opening of China and its entry into the WTO, Malaysia would have to find its role. Agriculture and new sources of income and new sources of wealth for the small and medium sized industries would be identified.

Quoting figures, the Deputy Prime Minister said Malaysia was currently some 65 per cent self-sufficient in rice and if the yield per hectare was increased, Malaysia could in fact be a rice exporter.

There was a future for the small and medium-sized business in the development of the rice industry instead of just planting rice, he added.

On Asean and the Asean Free Trade Area (Afta), Abdullah said the full potential of the regional grouping had not been fully realised. The members were fully committed to the grouping. They were looking to growth triangles for additional cooperation.

"Asean (countries) are compelled to be allies and we have to be together," he said.

He assured the fund managers that: "There was no abandoning of Afta. It is still on track and there is a very strong committment to bring it to reality."

There had been concerns that the committment to Afta had waned. Several members were working on bilateral trade agreements and Malaysia had asked for more time for its national car project to comply with Afta.

On political issues, Abdullah said: "Support for power sharing through Barisan Nasional is very, very strong", hastening to add that all parties had to work very hard.

Umno would remain the main partner in the coalition and Pas would continue to be an important opposition party.

The fund managers said investors were "very positive" about the smooth transition.

They suggested that the formula be explained to investors in business capitals such as New York.

To this, the Deputy Prime Minister said that they could assist in explaining.