

# Mahathir confirms Abdullah as heir

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**PETALING JAYA:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad is confident his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi would lead the country to achieve the targets of Vision 2020.

He said had he been given the opportunity to complete his closing speech at the 56th Umno annual general assembly on June 22, he would have named Abdullah as successor.

"Yes. I would definitely have said it, and would have passed the responsibilities to Abdullah immediately, as this is an Umno tradition."

He was speaking to reporters at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang yesterday after a 10-day vacation in Italy.

He said the deputy president takes over from the party president.

Based on party tradition, with the support of the majority, he would also become the new prime minister.

"I support the appointment of Abdullah as prime minister and acting party president," Mahathir said.

"I hope the transition will take place smoothly and I will continue to support and work for Umno."

On what criteria he used to pick Abdullah as successor, Mahathir said the deputy prime minister was picked because he was the Umno deputy president and both of them have worked with each other for a long time.

"Once, I asked Abdullah whether he was ready to take over the reins of the country, and he said he was ready.

"Thus there are no doubts over this," he said.

He said when the assembly did not accept the resignation "I merely asked that I continue my responsibilities for another month".

At the meeting with Umno leaders at Sri Perdana in Putrajaya the next day, he was persuaded to continue for another 16 months.

Mahathir said he was assured there would not be any power struggle within the party.