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Transfer of power plan well accepted, says Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today said the "thumbs up" given by the business community and public towards the leadership transition proved that the announcement has been well accepted.

Speaking to reporters after opening the Malaysian E-Government 2002 conference at the Sheraton Imperial, he said: "I am very happy. It just proves that what the Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) had in mind to ensure a smooth transition has been accepted well.

"The market response has been very encouraging," he said when asked to comment on the business community's good response to the recently announced leadership transition process.

It was announced after a specially convened Umno supreme council meeting recently that Dr Mahathir would remain Prime Minister, Umno president, Barisan Nasional chairman and Finance Minister until October next year, whereupon he would be succeeded by Abdullah.

The supreme council agreed to the October 2003 date for Dr Mahathir to step down for a smooth transition of power to take place.

Asked to comment on statements by other BN component party leaders on whether they should or should not also step down, Abdullah said what they did was up to them.

"It is up to the respective leaders to determine when they want to step down and when they want to hand over leadership to the next generation.

"We can't force anything on them. But they have to understand that transitions of power should be peaceful and smooth."

Asked whether the MCA peace plan has been successful, Abdullah said: "If they worked hard and well on the peace plan that the Prime Minister suggested, everything will work out."

On the financial scandals in corporate America involving large companies like Worldcom Inc and Enron, Abdullah said this proved that corporate governance was an important issue.

He said corporate governance must be stressed upon as an important objective.

Abdullah hoped that Malaysian companies would adhere to corporate governance and that there would not be similar incidents here.

On the US, which is now beset with financial scandals, having in the past told Malaysia to clean up its act, Abdullah quoted an old adage: "Mengata dulang paku serpih, mengata orang dia yang lebih (which is similar to "The pot calling the kettle black'."

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