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RAFIDAH-REACTION

BUSINESSES, STOCK MARKET SHOULD NOW BE RELIEVED WITH POWER TRANSITION
DECISION

By: Wan Nurzila Wan Abdul Rahman

KUALA LUMPUR, June 25 (Bernama) -- The stock market and the business community should now be relieved now that they know a time frame has been set for the leadership transition in Malaysia, the Minister of International Trade and Industry, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, said today.

Rafidah, who is also an UMNO Supreme Council member, said "they even know who will replace (Prime Minister Datu Seri) Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"That should be comfort for everybody in business because they will be rest assured that Pak Lah (Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) will carry on with the policies that Dr Mahathir has laid down.

"If at all there are to be any changes, he (Abdullah) will fine tune and improve on them as time goes on," she told reporters after an UMNO Supreme Council meeting here which discussed Dr Mahathir's intention to step down.

It was announced after the meeting that Dr Mahathir would remain as Prime Minister until October 2003 and that his deputy, Abdullah, would take over the reins thereafter.

Rafidah said: "We as Cabinet ministers will continue to support all these policies and help Pak Lah and support him in carrying them out."

The international trade and industry minister said the certainty should be very good for the country.

The Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange had fallen by some 26 points to 717.21 at the close today from yesterday's opening after Dr Mahathir announced on Saturday at the close of the UMNO General Assembly that he was relinquishing all party and government posts with immediate effect. But he was persuaded to stay on after appeals by UNO members. Dr Mahathir then left for a holiday in Italy on Sunday.

Today, UMNO secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob announced that Dr Mahathir would remain as Prime Minister until October 2003. Dr Mahathir will relinquish all his posts in the government and the party only after the Summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Kuala Lumpur in October 2003.

Dr Mahathir, who will remain as finance minister until October next year, has also appointed Abdullah as his successor.

"For this one year, Dr Mahathir is still Prime Minister and Finance Minister," Khalil said.

Former Second Finance Minister and Executive Director of the National Economic Action Council, Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, said there would be continuation in both the government's policies and their implementation.

"As a matter of fact, in the last couple of days, it was a non-event as far as the market drop was concerned," he said in reference to the performance of the KLSE.

"There is not much of a problem in these couple of days and we foresee confidence in the economy," said Mustapa, who is also an UMNO Supreme Council member.

He said the latest economic numbers indicated that "we are on the way up and we are confident in achieving the forecast in our Gross Domestic Product of over 4.0 percent."

Tenaga Nasional Bhd chairman Datuk Dr Jamaluddin Jarjis said the local stock market would settle down following the decision taken on the leadership transition.

"The planned transition of power from the incumbent to the new Prime Minister has been managed properly (and) I believe the market will be back to normal and corporate Malaysia will be back to where we were before," he said. -- BERNAMA

WNZ MR SHY