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INVESTMENT-POLICIES

RAFIDAH: INVESTORS SHOULDN'T BE UNDULY CONCERNED OVER PM'S RESIGNATION

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

TOKYO, July 22 (Bernama) -- Foreign investors need not be unduly concerned over Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's decision to step down as prime minister next year because Malaysia's economic management as well as trade and investment policies will remain in place, and changes will only be done to improve on them, if necessary.

This assurance was given by the Minister of International Trade and Industry, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, in response to some concerns raised by Japanese investors on Dr Mahathir's resignation in October next year.

"Ours is a collective government and policies implemented are made through collective decisions," she said.

Collective decisions made by the government through the Cabinet have been the norm for Malaysia over the last 20 years, she added.

"Any change in policies, we will improve on them and build on the foundation the Prime Minister has built up," she said.

"Essentially, they (policies) will be the same," the minister said.

Dr Mahathir also recently said that government's policies should not change just because there had been a change in the country's leadership.

During earlier seminars in Osaka, Rafidah had said that a smooth leadership transition had already been put in place with Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi taking over the reins late next year once Dr Mahathir stepped down.

She had fielded many questions after a seminar on "Business Opportunities in Malaysia" attended by over 700 participants including numerous Japanese officials representing small and medium scale enterprises keen to learn more about Malaysia's investment incentives as well as companies which were already operating in Malaysia.

To a question whether bumiputeras would be given assistance under the New Economic Policy in business, she clarified that the NEP had been replaced by National Development Policy 10 years ago and that the government "would help those who still need help but bumiputeras nowadays are quite resilient compared with 30 years ago and can come in on their own merit."

Asked whether Malaysia was planning to extend incentives for investment, she said investment policies such as the reinvestment allowance had been extended to 15 years and expanded to include more products and sectors.

Details of Malaysia's investment policies are available in Japanese on the Malaysian Industrial Development Authority website at [www.midajapan.or.jp](http://www.midajapan.or.jp).

Information on the incentives on trade can be obtained from [www.matrade.gov.my](http://www.matrade.gov.my) while information on small and medium scale enterprises can be gotten from [www.smidec.gov.my](http://www.smidec.gov.my) while the ministry's website is [www.miti.gov.my](http://www.miti.gov.my).

Rafidah said Malaysia also compared itself with other investment destinations and was ready to match or even better the incentives given by other countries as evidenced by the customised incentives, otherwise known as the pre-package incentives it was now offering investors.

Some of the participants had also complained about the quality of telecommunications facilities in Malaysia, particularly about the poor reception when using mobile phones. To this, Rafidah said the Energy, Communications and Multimedia Ministry was currently looking into ways to

improve the situation by encouraging companies to expand their capacities as well as merge among themselves to improve service quality.

Rafidah leaves for Hong Kong today with MITI, MIDA and MATRADE officials for a dialogue with the Malaysian business community there tonight and a business luncheon with the Hong Kong business community Tuesday. -- BERNAMA

MR SHY