

Goh: It's a good ship Dr M leaves behind

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SINGAPORE: Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong has expressed optimism over post-Mahathir Malaysia and lauded his counterpart for having developed "solid foundations" for his successor to build on.

In an interview with the *Bangkok Post* published on Monday, Goh was quoted as saying that Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad "is leaving behind a good ship with good officers and an engine working very well".

As such, his successor Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi should be able to carry on with the process "without too much difficulty", he said.

Goh also described Abdullah, who

takes over at the end of this month, as a capable leader whose abilities have been underestimated by observers.

"Most people have underestimated Abdullah Badawi, in my estimation. I think that he has much more than what people think he is capable of," he said.

"I see him being able to lead Malaysia upwards along the development path," he added, noting that "the challenges I think he will face include the challenge from PAS. That's a political challenge".

Goh also noted that Abdullah would have to restructure Malaysia's economy to compete with others from outside the region.

He was nonetheless "optimistic about Malaysia and I am not concerned about the transition".

Adding to his views on leadership in the region and the challenges that countries would face, Goh said the main one would be in restructuring economies to compete against India and China.

"All of a sudden, you have two gigantic factories. These are not just factories producing cheap goods, but they produce a range of goods from low to high value," he said.

But Goh is optimistic about prospects for the Asean region, especially over the next year, given the growth now being seen in the US.