

Govt will be the same

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Only change will be in leadership, says Mahathir

BY SA'ODAH ELIAS

PUTRAJAYA: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has reiterated that he will not meddle in the running of the country after his retirement as he believes his successor should be allowed to carry out his job without intervention.

"After the 31st (of this month), I have no right to decide on anything.

"I will step back and will not meddle with the administration of our coun-



HERE's your chance to pen your thoughts, via The Star Online, about Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as he prepares to leave office after 22 years as Prime Minister of Malaysia. Selected tributes will be published in The Star.

Write your tribute at:
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try," the Prime Minister said at the monthly gathering of the Finance Ministry yesterday.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said he was confident that everything in the country would proceed smoothly after he retired as the government policies, objectives and vision would remain the same.

"Although there will be leadership change, the Government will be the same, only different in style and approaches, maybe. I hope everyone will give his full commitment and co-operation to ensure the continued success of the country under Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi."

On whether Abdullah would also assume the post of Finance Minister on taking over the premiership, Dr Mahathir said that it was up to his successor to decide.

He said that contrary to many foreign reports that portrayed him as a dictator, the leadership of the Government had always been based on collective decisions.

This system, he said, would continue after Abdullah took over.

Dr Mahathir said he believed that the Malaysian leaders and people still wished to see their country achieve developed status by the year 2020.

"This is our objective, and I believe the new leadership will strive towards this and I hope all of us will give our co-operation," he added.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said he was confident that Abdullah would be more than capable of handling whatever problems the country might face.

The Government, he said, had weathered all kinds of challenges, including attempts to impoverish the country, and it would continue to do so in future.

Dr Mahathir said that when asked whether he was worried about any backlash from his remark at the open-

ing of the Organisation of Islamic Conference summit that had been condemned by many Western leaders as being anti-Semitic.

Asked to comment on the reluctance of some Muslim leaders to defend him over the statement, Dr Mahathir said this was because many of the Muslim countries were very much economically dependent on the West.

He said that although some of the Muslim countries might be far richer than Malaysia, their leaders were reluctant to go against the West because they were not economically independent.