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Abdullah-Leadership

ABDULLAH: CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP BUT NOT IN GOVT

From Hafizah Kamaruddin

TOKYO, July 10 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi Thursday assured Japan that the change in Malaysia's leadership in November will not alter the government.

The Deputy Prime Minister said: "In November this year, there will be a change of leadership, but there will be no change of regime."

Abdullah, who takes over from Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as the fifth Prime Minister in four months, said although Dr Mahathir will no longer be at the helm, Barisan Nasional (BN) will remain in power as it had been for the past 45 years.

"There will be no change in the laws, administrative system, key technocrats, political culture, economic system and basic circumstances."

Abdullah said this in his keynote address at the business forum organised by Malaysia's Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) and Japan External Trade Organisation (Jetro) here.

The forum, held in conjunction with Abdullah's three-day official visit to Japan, was attended by some 200 Japanese and 150 Malaysian businessmen and government officials.

The one-day "Continuity, Change and Cooperation: Malaysia and Japan Working Together" forum, was much awaited by the Japanese business community, in order to hear from Abdullah himself the impending change in the Malaysian government leadership.

The Deputy Prime Minister said: "Our (Malaysian government's) passions, priorities and aspirations will not change."

He said this included the Look East Policy, implemented by Dr Mahathir in 1981, that had placed Malaysia-Japan relationship on a solid ground with various cooperations and exchanges being carried out over the years covering a wide range of subjects.

"I believe that Malaysia must continue to Look East in the years and decades to come," he said.

Abdullah said Malaysia had learnt so much from the Japan's successes and failures and on how they managed them.

"Japan will continue to be a model for balancing social traditionalism and modernity, even as Malaysia continues to be a model for balancing religious traditionalism and modernity, at least in the Muslim world," he said.

Abdullah also said Dr Mahathir's Vision 2020 will be his vision too in turning Malaysia, into not only a fully developed economy by the year 2020, but "a prosperous society with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient."

"I am passionately committed to each and every one of these strategic objectives of Vision 2020," he said.

He credited Dr Mahathir as "one of the best men that Malaysia has produced over the last 500 years, saying: "It will be a very difficult act to follow."

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Abdullah said he had "not recently parachuted into the world of Malaysian government and politics".

The Deputy Prime Minister said he started his career as a civil servant some 39 years ago before venturing into politics and won the Kepala Batas parliamentary seat in 1978.

Abdullah has served all the four prime ministers of Malaysia and has led several ministries apart from being the Deputy Prime Minister since 1999.

"As such, I have been able to participate in many of the crucial decisions that are today the cornerstones of Malaysia's domestic and foreign policies," he said.

On Malaysia-Japan relations, Abdullah credited Japan for being "a friend " to Malaysia and East Asia during the financial crisis of 1997-1998.

"That was the time when we learnt who were our friends and who were our foes, (and) who cared about us and who did not," he said.

On regional cooperations, Abdullah said governments in East Asia should always try to be "part of the solutions but never part of the problems".

"We can cooperate even when we act unilaterally, in a form of constructive symbiosis. However the countries in the region should act and advance together for the good of the region," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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