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Japan confident Abdullah will build on policies

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Japan is confident that Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will build on policies initiated by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he takes over as Prime Minister in October.

Its ambassador to Malaysia, Masaki Konishi, said the Deputy Prime Minister would, however, do so with a different style.

This would include the Look East Policy "which is a pillar of the bilateral relationship", he added.

"Abdullah will maintain the fundamental policies which have worked so well for our countries for so many years. I have full confidence in him," he said in an interview.

He said current developments indicated that Abdullah would continue policies, especially those involving the economy and foreign affairs.

"In my talks with Malaysian leaders, I have received the assurance that although Abdullah's style will be different, the contents of domestic, economic and foreign affairs will be the same," he said.

Konishi said this when asked about the future of Japan-Malaysia ties after October when Dr Mahathir steps down to make way for Abdullah.

Describing Dr Mahathir as "a good friend of Japan", he added that Abdullah also knew Japan and its policies well.

Abdullah, he said, had visited Japan several times and understood the mechanics of the bilateral relationship.

On Dr Mahathir's decision to step down, he said it was sad to see the Prime Minister leave after being at the helm for 22 years.

"It is sad to see him go. Our responsibility is to see to it that the future of Japan-Malaysia ties is shaped in such a way that Dr Mahathir can be at ease after he steps down," he said.