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`Smooth transition from Dr M to Abdullah'

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - There will be a smooth transition of power on Oct 31 from Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who has proven his abilities in running the Government and chairing Cabinet meetings during the Prime Minister's absence.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said today all quarters should play their role in ensuring that Abdullah was able to carry out his duties smoothly.

"There was no problem faced by Abdullah when he was running the Government when Dr Mahathir was away on leave or on visits abroad. We have to get used to the new person in charge and Abdullah has proven himself.

"All leaders and ministers should play their role to assist Abdullah as ours is a collective Cabinet and not one which belongs to an individual. We must give Abdullah the same support that we have given Dr Mahathir throughout his leadership.

"Of course, we will miss Dr Mahathir's presence in the Cabinet and Government but he has given us an assurance that he will continue to play his role in the party," Rafidah, who is Wanita Umno chief, said after opening a seminar on Budget 2004.

The one-day seminar organised by Wanita Umno's housing and town planning bureau focused on housing opportunities provided under the Budget. It was held at the Putra World Trade Centre.

She said this when asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's statement yesterday that he will step down on Oct 31.

He said that his decision was final and he could not go back on his word as this would make him lose his credibility.

She said the people had to be constantly reminded as at times they tended to forget that the country's development and economic growth were due to the role played by BN.

"Some people think they will still enjoy the same development and economic growth irrespective of which party is in power.

"This is not true as the Opposition does not have the same credibility like the BN Government to overcome problems like the financial crisis," Rafidah added.