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Barisan govt to maintain business-friendly ways

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PUTRAJAYA: The Barisan National government will continue its business-friendly policies, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

He said it was even prepared to offer further incentives to attract more foreign direct investments.

Abdullah said the BN government, despite having won only a simple majority in last week's general election, "will look after their (people's) interests".

Abdullah said the priority now was to form a new cabinet to reassure the investment community of Malaysia's political situation and ensure they have confidence in the country.

"Those policies which have won the confidence of the investors and the business community will remain, especially the policies that work well," he said during a 30-minute interview with Bernama TV in a show hosted by Datuk Zuraidah Atan here on Friday.

"But the first thing I have to do is form the cabinet. I want to make sure the people have confidence in the cabinet. That is very important. There will certainly be new faces."

In an earlier interview with Bernama, he indicated that the new cabinet line-up would be made known before Wednesday.

Abdullah said he would also ensure that the federal government would continue to have a line of communication with the opposition-controlled states so as to ensure the successful implementation of projects.

The BN attained a simple majority in parliament in the just-concluded election, losing five states to the opposition. They are Penang, Selangor, Perak, Kedah

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Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi
Prime Minister

and Kelantan.

"It is not a problem for me to talk to them. Whatever projects that we decide to do, projects that have been allocated and work that have been committed to, of course it will be our priority to have them implemented.

"But if, for some reasons, they (the opposition-controlled states) don't want the new projects, how can I force these upon them?" he asked.

Abdullah said he would make sure that projects already in place would follow through as they created jobs and brought new wealth for the people.

"We believe that the projects that we launched are good projects, good for our economy, for our country and for the people. There's no reason why I should stop just because we now have some states that do not belong to the BN.

factors, such as rising crude oil prices.

Abdullah stressed the importance of managing inflation and the government's commitment to ensure that the people would not suffer as a result of surging crude oil prices.

On Friday, New York's main oil contract, light sweet crude for delivery in April, shed 12 US cents to close at US\$110.21 (RM350) per barrel.

"We want sustained economic growth," Abdullah said, expressing confidence that the government had the ability to handle and manage inflation induced by skyrocketing oil prices.

Malaysia's economy grew at a blistering pace of 7.3 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2007, leading to a commendable 6.3 per cent gross domestic product for the whole of last year.

Last year's growth was the country's fastest since the second quarter of 2004 when the economy expanded by 7.9 per cent.

Asked whether the economy was resilient enough to face the US economic slowdown, Abdullah said it was fundamentally strong while its market was well diversified and not entirely dependent on the United States.

"Malaysia's trade with the US at present is less than 18 per cent compared with its trade with Asean countries, which is currently 26 per cent," he said.

He also said the government would ensure the people enjoyed security and peace.

"That is the most important precondition. How we manage the government, that will be watched carefully. What we promise, we will deliver," he said. — Bernama