

We owe a lot to Tunku: Mahathir

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ALOR STAR, Thurs.

— Malaysia owes its strong economy and political stability to a great extent to the foundation laid by Tunku Abdul Rahman, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He described the Tunku as a sincere leader who had tirelessly fought for the country's independence.

Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir's message was read by the Speaker of the State Assembly, Datuk Abdullah bin Haji Ismail, in conjunction with the Tunku's 76th birthday celebration at the Balai Besar here.

He said past politicians, who carried out

their struggle, did not hope for any returns for their sacrifices.

"They had struggled for the sake of their race, religion and country," he added.

Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir said the past fighters for independence were steadfast in their struggle and did not give up easily although they were not given any position after the country had achieved independence.

Statesman

He added that although the Tunku was no longer active in politics he was still well remembered by the people.

Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Nahar Shahabuddin, in his con-

gratulatory speech, said the Tunku was a statesman well respected by the Islamic and Western world.

He said the Tunku was always in the hearts of the people because of his wide social contacts and tireless efforts in helping them.

The Tunku and his wife, Tun Sharifah Rodziah, were made to sit in a specially-constructed sailing boat which was pulled from his residence, Rumah Merdeka in Jalan Putra, to the Balai Besar by 76 members of Umno, MCA and MIC.

The boat was escorted by 76 Wanita members from the three parties, carrying "bungar manggar".

Poem recited

A lion dance troupe, seni silat group and Indian drummers also took part in the quarter-mile procession.

A poem, entitled "Tunku on his birthday", specially written by novelist A. Samad Said, was read by Encik Fauzi Hadi.

About 3,000 guests attended the birthday celebration jointly organised by Umno, MCA and MIC.