

MP: Good future if Dr M stays on

NST 11 MAR 1988

A GOVERNMENT backbencher said Malaysia could prosper further if Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad remained at its helm as Prime Minister.

Speaking during the debate on the royal address, Datuk Abdullah Ahmad (BN-Kok Lanas) said many countries whose Prime Ministers ruled for long periods had prospered and their stability attracted investors.

He cited Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister for the last 23 years, and Britain's Mrs Margaret Thatcher, now serving her fourth at the helm, as examples.

Datuk Abdullah said Thailand, which once lagged behind Malaysia, now had quadrupled its foreign investment because of the stable rule under Gen Prem Tinsulanonda.

He said the Thais were aided by their people's unity and industriousness.

Indonesia, he said, had only had two presidents in 43 years but Malaysia had had four Prime Ministers in 31 years.

"Dr Mahathir is a political phenomenon just like Mrs Thatcher or Mr Lee Kuan Yew. His position is getting stronger now and if he remains longer at the head of the Malaysian Government, the country will prosper," he said.

He added that the country's first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman held the post for 13 years "and we had a good innings by any standard".

"Under Dr Mahathir we have advanced further. We have our own car, heavy industries, the Penang Bridge and Malaysia is recognised as a leader of the Third World.

Datuk Abdullah said Dr Mahathir, because of his stance in fighting drug abuse and firmness as a Third World leader, had gained worldwide respect.

He said Malaysia would prosper under Dr Mahathir's continued leadership.

On the *Cintailah Bahasa Kita* campaign to promote the national language, Datuk Abdullah said Malaysians should learn at least two or three languages.

"Are Dr Mahathir, Anwar Ibrahim, Mohamed Rahmat or I less Malay because we speak other languages? Or is Lee Kim Sai less Chinese because he speaks fluent Malay?"

Numerous interruptions

The sole Pas representative from Pengkalan Chepa, Haji Nik Abdullah Arshad, raised a furore among backbenchers, mainly former members of Umno, during his speech.

Haji Nik Abdullah, who spoke on national unity, was interrupted numerous times by Hashim Safin (BN-Tanah Merah), Zubir Embong (BN-Kuala Terengganu), Shahadan Kassim (BN-Arau) and Parliamentary Secretary to the Information Ministry Datuk Haji Dusuki Ahmad.

He said Dr Mahathir, now pro-tem head of Umno Baru could not expect the people to unite when his own members were divided.

Haji Nik Abdullah received applause from DAP MPs.

He said the Government should strive to overcome polarisation. If not, the threat of racial conflict would always remain.