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Dr Mahathir a moderate leader, says Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is a moderate Muslim leader whose thinking and views are acceptable to Muslims and non-Muslims here and abroad, his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, said today.

"Dr Mahathir as a leader is accepted by all due to his attitude which is not extremist," Abdullah said after opening a seminar on "Dr Mahathir's Thoughts" today.

Among Dr Mahathir's popular views are those on globalisation, democracy, human rights and South-South co-operation.

"That is why there is successful international level co-operation like the Langkawi International Dialogue that introduced smart-partnership and is well accepted in the south of Africa and the Middle East and also welcomed by the private sector," he said.

He said there was also Dr Mahathir's idea for co-operation among countries of the Far East which, although it did not materialise as the East Asia Economic Caucus in name, provided opportunities for leaders of Japan, China, South Korea and Asean countries to meet.

"If Dr Mahathir were an extremist Islamic leader not many would accept him, including Muslims themselves, but due to his moderate stance he is accepted."

He said Mahathir's thoughts as a leader had brought about many changes in the country.

"He can be considered the biggest catalyst for bringing about development and progress to the country and its races.

"One of his achievements, which I consider very special, is the instillation of confidence among Malaysians, especially the Malays, that they can succeed and excel in their endeavours if they really try and shed their inferiority complex," he said.

He said Dr Mahathir had always stressed the setting up of facilities to enable the people to acquire knowledge, skills and professional qualifications.

"Dr Mahathir himself is an avid reader who reads the latest books, especially those related to management, strategic thinking, economic problems, currency traders, economic planning and globalisation.

"And a favourite subject of his is information technology ... ."

Abdullah also dismissed allegations that Dr Mahathir was a dictator, saying this could not be true because Dr Mahathir allowed in-depth discussions and everyone could give their views during Cabinet meetings.

"Sometimes Dr Mahathir's working papers too are rejected by the Cabinet as he accepts the views of others."

Since becoming a Cabinet member, Abdullah said he could not remember a single incident when Dr Mahathir insisted that his views be accepted by the Cabinet.

"This has never happened. What has happened are discussions with the intention of reaching a consensus.

"Dr Mahathir always places emphasis on Cabinet decisions through consensus and not by simple raised-hand vote-taking where the majority wins and the minority loses," he added.

The seminar was organised by a group comprising academicians, businessmen and politicians.

The chairman is Datuk Mohd Bakri Mohamad, executive chairman of Kelantan

Water Sdn Bhd.

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