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Mahathir-Agong

GOV'T THANKS TUANKU JA'AFAR FOR HIS CONTRIBUTION

KUALA LUMPUR, April 20 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight thanked Tuanku Ja'afar on behalf of the government and the people for his contribution and services during his reign as Yang di-Pertuan Agong for five years.

The prime minister said under Tuanku Ja'afar's reign, the people of Malaysia enjoyed prosperity and a higher quality of life.

In his speech at the Official Farewell ceremony held by the federal government for Tuanku Ja'afar and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Najihah here, Dr Mahathir also expressed the government's appreciation to the royal couple for their success in fostering closer relations between Malaysia and the foreign nations particularly the neighbouring countries.

"The government is very proud of the role played by Tuanku in the field of international relations through his visits abroad. Tuanku's experience and knowledge as a diplomat had contributed significantly in forging closer bilateral relations with the countries he visited," he said.

Dr Mahathir said through the cordial relations between the King and foreign heads of state, Malaysia had become better known internationally.

Tuanku Ja'afar of Negeri Sembilan completes his reign as the 10th Yang di-Pertuan Agong on Sunday. He will be succeeded by the Sultan of Selangor.

The prime minister said Malaysia had achieved much success during Tuanku Ja'afar's reign such as the nation's excellence in organising the 16th Commonwealth Games and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) conference last year.

"These successes brought glory to the nation in the eyes of the world and in this respect, the role played by Tuanku as the symbol of solidarity and supremacy of the law is crucial," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the people were aware that all these would not have been possible without the encouragement, sincerity, dedication and sensitivity of the King in matters that involved the interest of the people.

The prime minister also said that the government, with guidance from Tuanku Ja'afar, succeeded in overcoming the economic crisis and political problems faced by the country with the peoples' determination and commitment.

He said although the country was still feeling the effects of the economic crisis which started in July 1997, several indicators such as the sale of cars and houses as well as the country's financial reserves had shown that the economy was improving.

"The economic recovery might not have been possible without the undivided support of the people, government officers and the leaders as well as the commitment of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong in motivating the peoples' spirit for cooperation and solidarity," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that Tuanku Najihah had shown her sensitivity towards the needs of the less privileged group, the aged and the handicapped.

-- BERNAMA

MAM AO