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Shining example of Asian statesman

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PETALING JAYA, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is a shining example of an Asian statesman and a person who has risen beyond the norm and excelled.

Paying tribute to Dr Mahathir at the launch of his book A New Deal for Asia, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the Prime Minister was recognised as having contributed greatly to Asia's coming of age.

"He has fought against the odds and prevailed. His tenacity and perseverance are his great assets. This is really due to his firm commitment to his beliefs," said Abdullah.

He said Dr Mahathir was a firm believer in Asia and its ability to become a great continent again, and was committed to giving Asia the push and encouragement to reclaim its destiny.

"In this respect, A New Deal for Asia is a manifestation of his strong belief in Asia's potential capacity," said Abdullah at the launch held at the Sunway Lagoon Resort Hotel.

He said, while Dr Mahathir was an advocate of the rise of Asia, he had also been prudent and preferred to look in terms of a "global century", where everyone benefited, rather than the so-called "Asian century".

"His concept of 'Prosper Thy Neighbour' has become an oft-quoted phrase that symbolises Dr Mahathir's philosophy.

"To him, it cannot be seen as a zero-sum game. He is concerned that by merely highlighting too much on the Asian century, this could well invite unnecessary attacks for there appears to be an inherent fear by some quarters of somebody else's emergence," Abdullah said.

Noting that Dr Mahathir had chosen the phrase "A New Deal" as the title, Abdullah reminded the audience of former American President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "new deal" which transformed the US of the 1930s.

He said the US "new deal" had brought hope and actual progress, cutting across racial and economic lines. That new deal, he said, was comprehensive in nature and brought the US to a higher status plain.

"It also gave the US the much needed steam to push itself out of the depression.

"I believe 'A New Deal for Asia' could be compared to Roosevelt's new deal of the 1930s, at least in the sense of the power of the ideas that are being generated from his book. Dr Mahathir's new deal is for Asia," he said.

The Deputy Prime Minister also said Asia must seize this opportunity and be willing to be bold and brave to make that commitment, and urged all to emulate the Prime Minister's resolve.

"The time has come for all of us to stand with the Prime Minister and take that first step which would surely lead to a giant step ahead for Asia and the world," he said.

Abdullah said right from the early years, Dr Mahathir had demonstrated the power of his pen by first writing for the newspapers and then publishing the thought-provoking Malay Dilemma.

Saying he had read "every page" of this book despite it being banned at that time, he noted it was a book which was instrumental in challenging the prevalent mindset of the Malays.

He said another of Dr Mahathir's book, The Way Forward, had articulated the raison d'etre for the New Economic Policy. The book is being

translated into several languages, including Bahasa Malaysia, by Pelanduk Publications (M) Sdn Bhd.

A New Deal for Asia, Abdullah said, gave a new sense of direction at a time where the region was undergoing tremendous challenges. He said while Asia had been successful in integrating into the international economic system, this had its downside as well as upside.

He added today, Malaysia was US' 14th largest trading partner.

A New Deal for Asia retails at RM25 a copy and is only available in paperback.

Pelanduk managing director Datuk Ng Tieh Chuan said 10,000 copies had been printed. The book has also been translated into Japanese and 18,000 copies have been printed.

The Japanese version will be launched in Tokyo early next month.

He said the book would be serialised by Time magazine and other international publications had also sought similar rights.

The Malay version of The Way Forward will be available next month.

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