

30/08/2000

`Tun Ismail Ali a man of clear vision, high intellect'

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today paid tribute to Tun Ismail Ali whom he described as a man of clear vision, high intellect and strong character and one who placed service to the nation above all.

Dr Mahathir said they were dear friends although they often disagreed on many things including issues of public policy.

"Of course, he was also my brother-in-law. This gave me no special privilege in his eyes - he merely viewed me as a medical doctor who was married to his sister," he said at a conference dedicated to Ismail's memory.

The Prime Minister said he had to earn Ismail's respect and they had come to an "uneasy truce" in the knowledge that each was capable of holding a good discussion on any issue with honesty and respect.

He said they had differences of views but these were never serious enough to affect their cordial personal relations.

"He liked to have the last word on issues and so did I. I usually approached the Mexican standoff by putting down in writing how I really felt.

"That was my way of getting the last word," he said.

Dr Mahathir also spoke of Ismail's legacy at Bank Negara, Permodalan Nasional Bhd and his impact on the nation.

Ismail was the first Malaysian governor of Bank Negara. He died on July 6, 1998 at the age of 79.

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