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Asean-Citation

DR MAHATHIR, LEE KUAN YEW CITED IN RANKS OF ASIAN GREAT LEADERS

By: Tham Choy Lin

SINGAPORE, Sept 10 (Bernama) -- Visionary and revolutionary -- these are the hallmarks cited of Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Singapore's Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew who tonight were presented the Asean Achievement Millennium Award here.

The two leaders rank alongside Asian greats of the 20th century, Mahatma Gandhi, Mao Tse Tung and Deng Xiao Ping, according to the citations for the two leaders who were honoured at an exclusive dinner by the Asean Business Forum (ABF).

The two leaders were singled out for the award for their roles in transforming their countries and contributions to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).

Asean secretary-general Rudolfo Severino, in his message, said the selection of the two leaders were well deserved.

"Their valuable contributions to the region have enable our societies to face the new millennium with confidence and much hope," said Severino.

Dr Mahathir's citation was read out by Singapore's Professor Arthur Lim, an eye specialist who was a former college-mate of the Malaysian prime minister who did his medical studies here.

"They were all +unreasonable+ revolutionaries - driven by impossible dreams, possessed unreasonable vision, committed to what so obviously could not be done," said Prof Lim.

Dr Mahathir was described not only as the greatest Malaysian leader of the 20th century but also "the greatest Malay of the past 500 years".

Under Dr Mahathir, Malaysians broke the bonds of colonial servitude and what was "ini tidak boleh, itu tidak boleh, semua tidak boleh" became "Malaysia Boleh", the citation added.

"Under his watch, and for the first time in history, a disparate and incredibly multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural assembly of peoples has become a nation."

The citation also highlighted that over the last 30 years, 20 under Dr Mahathir, Malaysia had emerged as the world champion of poverty eradication according to United Nations statistics.

Dr Mahathir, 76, was credited with transforming Malaysia from an agricultural country to a leading industrial economy.

The Mahathir modernisation was not at an end as it "will continue long when he is no more with us," the citation said.

Lee, 78, who was Singapore's premier for 31 years before stepping down in 1990, was singled out for the quality of his political leadership, his intolerance of corruption and how he had rallied the small island-state to overcome great odds.

"He bases his positions on core values, basic principles and national interests. He does not sway with the breeze of expediency or political correctness," according to the citation for the Singapore leader read out by Kuala Lumpur-based Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (Asli) executive director Datuk Michael Yeoh.

Commemorative gold and silver coins carrying the profiles of the two leaders were also issued by the Singapore Mint for the occasion.

Proceeds of the sales would go towards a "globalisation learning journey programme" for students in the two countries.

Information on the coins are available on [www.mint.com.sg](http://www.mint.com.sg)

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