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Thanks, Dr M - for your 20 years of service

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I WISH to congratulate Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his 20th year in service as Malaysia's Prime Minister.

I cannot vividly recall his appointment 20 years ago on July 16, 1981, since I was just 11 years old then, but I have lived and gone through a series of significant moments in my life throughout his tenure in office.

I went through school, university, and got my professional qualifications, begun my career, got married and started my own family throughout those years.

In a lot of ways, I realised I am one of the "cronies" who have benefited from his leadership of the country. I thank him personally for that.

Obviously, I am still moving on in life and facing challenges by the day but I have a vision for myself and my family - and I owe some part of that vision to the PM.

I am not ashamed to state that I admire our Prime Minister despite all the campaigns against him. I am not saying he is perfect but I don't think anyone can deny that he is a man of vision and courage.

It is these two qualities that I think have made him the kind of leader that he is today.

I remember making an effort to understand his vision for the country and his style of leadership by getting hold of most of his books or books on him by others. I must say that a lot of his books provide a small insight into his ideas that is enough for a layman like me to understand.

I read The Malay Dilemma when I was in university simply because I wanted to understand the PM better.

The book is interesting and very frank. It gave me a different point of view of the subject. It is one of my prized possessions (I have the 1970 original print version).

For all those university students who are bent on hating the PM, I encourage you to read the book and read it with sincerity.

You do not have to agree with all his points but since you all are so intelligent, be fair to the man before criticising him.

I do receive a few unwelcomed remarks when I write or talk about the PM. I accept some as valid but I do not accept baseless slander and the sort.

Deferring views are good. It shows some of us are thinking. Unfortunately, what is bad is that some views are based on slander and hate.

What more when there are quarters in the political scene making it their cause to ensure that a lot of people hate the PM. I don't have to make my point here - just surf all the "hate" websites and then sit back and evaluate it for yourself.

The fact that these people have to go to that extent to smear the PM is in itself an indication of his popularity among the people. I believe Malaysians are mature enough to see the difference at the end of the day.

Throughout his 20 years, no one can doubt the successes that his leadership has brought to the country. Only an ignorant person would say otherwise. Even the PM admits that he has made mistakes but we as the people should be thankful that he did not make mistakes during times of crisis. A good example is during the attack on our currency in 1997.

We must remember that it is not he alone who has brought change to the country. It is the whole team of people that he leads. I think even the PM

would agree that it was a team effort and still is.

However, as the leader he has provided the vision and the courage. He did it so well that I myself have my own vision today and I am sure all of Malaysians in some way have managed to have their own vision too. Through each small vision that we have, all of us have made a big difference to the country's progress.

Isn't that what leadership is all about? We need a leader to show us the way that we should be heading and how we are going to achieve it. However, it must be a noble cause that all of us and our next generation will benefit from. Vision 2020 is the cause.

Remembering your 20 years in service I wish to say a few words to Dr Mahathir. I thank you for all those 20 years. I am one of your thankful "cronies". I think you have done a great job and I hope you can continue to do so until the right time comes when you want to pass on the baton.

I also hope that you will encourage your successor to continue all that you have envisioned for the nation. I want to thank your family for allowing you to spend more time with your country.

It is my hope that you continue having the courage to lead Malaysia despite all the efforts of "misfits" out there to destroy your credibility. You are right, in the final analysis Malaysians can see the truth.

Finally, I wish you can continue to write. I have enjoyed all your articles in the Japanese daily and your books after The Malay Dilemma. And also I hope someone would write your biography when you are still around.

I probably will not know you personally my dear Prime Minister but I can say that the last 20 years have been great.