

Thousands turn up to greet Mahathir and wife

SUBANG JAYA: Malaysians turned up in the thousands to greet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on his return from his 10-day overseas trip.

For 57-year-old Shukri Hanif, sacrificing breakfast and travelling for more than five hours in a bus to show his love for the Prime Minister was worth his time and effort.

The *pasar malam* trader had arrived as early as 6am yesterday from Kuala Kangsar, Perak to join in the welcome reception to greet the Prime Minister and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

"It is not everyday you get to meet your leader and coming here was a good opportunity to see him in person and to be part of the country's history," he said, adding that he has been an Umno member for more than 20 years.

Sitting on a curb at the car park of the Malaysian Royal Air Force base, he said it was his first time being part of such a large gathering.

Draping an Umno flag around him, he said when he learnt of the Prime Minister's announcement to resign last week, he was very sad and broke down as he felt the country had suffered the loss of a great leader.

Ilya Qastalanni Haulilah, 15, said Dr Mahathir had inspired Malaysians with the sacrifices made for the nation.

Selangor MIC state treasurer S. Doraisami said Dr Mahathir would still be needed to act as an adviser to help lead the nation, alongside his named successor, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Fifty teachers from the Cheras Education Foundation, 50 Umno members from the Cheras branch and 40 members from the Kota Tinggi MCA branch were among the early birds to show their support for Dr Mahathir.