

# People's support a great help to govt

**PETALING JAYA:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday the strong support from the people has enabled the government to rule through good and bad times.

"The people should continue to support the government to ensure the country is problem-free."

He was speaking to thousands of supporters who turned up at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang to welcome him home.

Mahathir said he hoped the people, Umno and Barisan Nasional component parties will continue to support his designated successor, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

During the gathering, he also received a pennant with the lyrics of *Khalifah Kita*, a song dedicated to him by local artists.

He received it from Ilya Qastalanni Haulilah, 15, and Dewi Seri Bayu Nordin Selat, six.

Earlier, before the prime minister's executive jet touched down at the base, a light aircraft buzzed pass with banner carrying the words "*Dr M - Kepulangan Mu Dinantikan*" (Dr M - We await your return).

At the arrival lounge, the VIP room was overflowing with nearly all the federal and state leaders from the various Barisan Nasional component parties.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and Deputy International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Kerk Choo Ting were there as early as 6.30am.

Other leaders began arriving and there was only standing room in the lounge by the time Ma-

hathir's plane landed at about 8am.

Security at the air terminal was tight as both military and police personnel were on alert.

Outside the air terminal, the immediate parking lots were cordoned, and the atmosphere was akin to that of an election rally as banners were visible all over the place.

Written in both English and the national language, there were banners by the various BN component party members from their various divisions throughout the country.

Others, including artists, youth bodies and representatives from educational institutions, made their presence felt in the wee hours of the morning.

Many had begun arriving at the base as early 5.30am.

By the time the prime minister emerged from the air terminal at 8.40am, the crowd had swelled to more than 5,000 people.

As the crowd spotted Mahathir, there were whoops of joy and "*Hidup Mahathir!*" were shouted.

Mahathir had flown to Naples, Italy, on June 23 for a 10-day vacation after announcing his resignation from all party posts the previous day.

His returns from previous trips abroad would only have seen a modest number of people, mostly family members and government and political leaders, waiting to greet him.

The overwhelming response this time around would definitely be etched in his mind when leaves the stage.