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Malaysia owes a lot to the two doctors

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THE article by Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad on "The legacy of Tun Dr Ismail" (NST, Dec 25) was very illuminating.

I was a boy in secondary school on May 13, 1969, when some miscreants sparked the race riots. I knew that something had gone wrong in the country but my young mind could not fully grasp the impact.

But, in my heart, I knew that it was something ugly.

My impression of the late Tun Dr Ismail was that he was a stern personality.

Now I realise that he was a good leader, a statesman with an expansive visionary view who devoted his energies to healing a nation.

History must pay tribute to him as a good "ICU doctor" who contributed so much to resuscitate life into a co-matose democracy and restored public safety.

As I look back over the last 30 years and on the steady progress of our country, I find another good doctor who managed to treat, resuscitate and heal the nation with his own prescriptions, once in 1986/87 and again when the currency crisis was orchestrated to "knock out" our economy in 1997/98.

The two doctors faced different "ICU" situations but both of them put tremendous value on the future - a certain future to be built on peace and harmony in a multi-cultural society as a stable platform for growth, development and shared prosperity.

As I reflect on Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's recent speeches at home and those delivered at international platforms, I see a beautiful metamorphosis of a person who is at once recognised as a statesman in a multi-cultural society and Father of Modern Malaysia.

The two doctors always placed the well-being of our multi-cultural society and the need for a prosperous future on a high pedestal.

While most of us are only trained to "see" the importance of this factor, the two doctors had the advantage of being trained to hear the inaudible with their stethoscopes.

That additional insight and training to manage the "ICU patient" may have given them a leadership edge.

I thank the two doctors for creating a legacy and a nation we can