

Abdullah pays tribute to Mahathir

STAR 22 JUN 2003

DATUKSERI Dr Mahathir Mohamad is a patriot and a statesman par excellence, said Deputy Prime Minister and Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

In a tribute to the Prime Minister and party president lasting 44 minutes, Abdullah said the people and the entire country had undergone a transformation "nothing short of remarkable" under his stewardship.

The country's physical, social, political and economic landscape has changed tremendously over the past 22 years. Umno itself has not been spared.

"The president has proved to be the wise and steadfast captain of the ship. The president has succeeded in guiding the vessel through difficult times," he said in his winding up speech.

Abdullah will take over as Prime Minister and Umno president in October.

Islam, he said, was given a dynamic and progressive dimension because Dr Mahathir always stressed on the fundamentals and adopted a realistic



UMNO
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
2003

approach.

"He is the symbol of a warrior brave, firm and conscientious. Indeed, he is everything a statesman ought to be," he said.

As a token of the country's appreciation, he said the Government would establish an institute dedicated to the thoughts of Dr Mahathir.

Abdullah also paid tribute to the

first lady, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, and the family members of Dr Mahathir.

"She too has sacrificed a lot to share her beloved husband with the rest of us. Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah is a model woman, wife and mother," he added.

Personally, Abdullah said he had undergone much together with Dr Mahathir.

"Twenty two years have passed by so quickly. Today, among the Cabinet members, only (Datuk Seri) Rafidah (Aziz) and I are left from the first Cabinet formed in 1981," he said.

Abdullah said everything happened for a reason, including his "sabbatical" from the Government of about three years and 10 months.

"While being a president, there are

admittedly things that some Umno leaders and members might have done which hurt his feelings.

"On behalf of Umno members, the supreme council, (Datin Paduka Seri) Endon (Mahmood) and myself, I beg for forgiveness from Dr Mahathir and Kak Hasmah," he said.

Abdullah said he had received an autographed copy of Dr Mahathir's keynote address at the party general assembly on Thursday morning.

"In it, Dr Mahathir wrote 'May Allah bless you when you take over.' The trust in which the president placed upon me, I accept.

"This is my solemn belief - being fierce, hard or soft is not my approach. My first approach and my last is firmness, fairness and equality for all." he said.