

# Dr M, your 'sons and daughters' salute you

*star 19/10*  
OVER the past two weeks have devoted my column to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who will be leaving office by the end of the month.

The writings, with emphasis on his leadership from a personal perspective, was to help readers better understand this extraordinary Malaysian leader.

Certainly, I believe, the majority of Malaysians share my sentiments. Over the past few weeks, I have received countless e-mail, letters and telephone calls from readers around the world who wanted to express their feelings about Dr Mahathir.

Not one of these ordinary Malaysians felt that the tribute being paid to Dr Mahathir could be regarded as idolatry, toadying and sycophancy, as some politicians have claimed.

Malaysians, regardless of their race and religion, simply want to say thank you to a man they genuinely believe has contributed greatly to their lives.

Here is a man who has been the catalyst of tremendous changes to Malaysia over the last 22 years.

While not all the messages were commendable of Dr Mahathir, which is understandable and accepted in any democratic society, they acknowledged the economic differences he had brought to this country.

Some clearly did not agree with his politics but they accepted his vision and boldness. Much more than that, they also said they would miss him. But none said the tribute was excessive.

I have decided to reproduce extracts of e-mail and letters from readers who took the trouble to respond.

These Malaysians deserve to be heard by the rest of the nation, especially the petty politicians.

Reader Mike Lui wrote that Dr Mahathir is more than just a Prime Minister, describing him as "a father who would spank us when we misbehave and when he knew what



## On The Beat

By WONG CHUN WAI

was better he would not back down."

"Our country still lacks a true democracy but yet we never lacked a leader who cared," he said, adding that Malaysians could not expect a perfect man.

Dr Mahathir, as Lui aptly pointed out, did not feel the need for popularity in his leadership and quest to make Malaysia better, and that the whole nation would miss his leadership.

"We have been lucky to have him. For this is indeed a great man and lie has served the country well," Lui wrote. "His work has made all of us proud as Malaysians."

Reader Mohamed Ismail said Dr Mahathir had made many unpopular decisions in his career and had angered him several times, but in the end the Prime Minister was pi-oven correct.

"He was a man ahead of the times. He was always many steps ahead of us and often we could not understand that he just wanted the best for us.

"In the end, he was right and for that we must salute him.

"As a human being, he made mistakes but during the 22 years as a leader, his achievements for Malaysia certainly outweighed those flaws.

"As a Muslim, he also dared to tell us what was wrong with us," wrote Mohamed.

Reader Lim Chew Yin admitted that at times she, too, had been angry with Dr Mahathir, especially during the 1997 financial crisis and his strong criticism of the West "but he stuck to his guns and we came away with flying colours."

"I know this sounds clichéd, but I will always admire him and love him. He will be greatly missed."

Riduan Ismail from Kuala Lumpur telephoned to say he was upset with the "fault finders" and those with "holier than thou" attitude who were more concerned with achieving their political ambitions in the name of religion.

"Dr Mahathir was one man who would never be intimidated by those who want to chart the course of the nation with their medieval social order.

"As a Muslim, I will remember Dr Mahathir for his guts in voicing the concerns of moderate Muslims."

Ang Layping, who lives in the United States, wrote that she was often overseas but had followed the country's development and Dr Mahathir's leadership closely over the years.

"I personally felt that our country is very lucky to have such a respectful and courageous leader. I have met him in New York and I truly wish him well in health and many more years to come.

"Malaysians should be very proud of him: without him, we Malaysians will not be known to other nations. Almost everyone in the world knows our prime minister. I sincerely salute you. Thank you, sir."

Couple Anitha and S. Daniel e-mailed me to say that they were "deeply touched with your kind words and understanding of our prime minister" in the two previous articles.

"Our Prime Minister told us that we could do anything we want just by believing in ourselves.

"He has so much confidence in us that we lack in ourselves. Despite the many critics, he made Malaysia shine."

From Italy, reader Lee Sau Kuan wrote that "Dr Mahathir has developed Malaysia and also made Malaysian well-known. I now live in Italy but I miss him dearly."

Chee Keong Tan, in his late 20s, wrote: "I am one of the lucky people in the age whereby we witnessed

the tremendous growth of our beloved nation. Looking around today, the living condition has improved, infrastructures have been upgraded, we are all at least the majority - more comfortable now than in the 80s.

"We owe all these to Dr M, a person so close to our hearts that he is like family, a fatherly figure to all of us.

"I am sure many of us know how much he has sacrificed for the country and the people, yet we have disappointed him again and again with problems.

"But just like a father, he never gave up on his 'sons and daughters.' Thanks for not giving up on us, thanks for being a great father to all Malaysians. And thanks for giving us a future.

"From the bottom of my heart, as well as many of the Malaysians, we will really miss you and your love to us will never be forgotten. We love you, Dr M!"

Viclenswari Thurairajah wrote to say that she has an 11-year-old daughter and wants to send a postcard to Dr Mahathir to thank him for what he has done for Malaysia.

Yes, your family can do so by writing to him at the Prime Minister's Office, Bangunan Perdana Putra, Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan, 62502 Putrajaya or email to ppm@pmo.gov.my.

From Ohio State University in the United States, student Johnny Khong, too, said he wanted to write to Dr Mahathir to express "my deepest appreciation for his leadership and inspiration during his tenure."

And finally, I even received two responses from Bosnia and Ethiopia - saluting Dr Mahathir. They, too, say they will miss Dr Mahathir as much as all of us.

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