

PM: Gallery is not to idolise Dr M

S 21 DEC 2003

KUALA LUMPUR: Visitors to Galeria Sri Perdana, the former official residence of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad at Jalan Damansara here, will have an insight into the outstanding leadership style of the country's fourth Prime Minister.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who opened the building yesterday, said it was not an effort to idolise Dr Mahathir but to allow the next generation as well as those who want to express their gratitude for his contributions to the nation and learn about history, to gain knowledge about the former premier's leadership style.

"Dr Mahathir doesn't want to be idolised. He is not comfortable and becomes embarrassed when idolised," Abdullah said.

The Prime Minister said Dr Mahathir also did not want any building to be named after him.

"Dr Mahathir said it is enough if he becomes a successful leader who has helped to develop the country."

Abdullah said many incidents had taken place in the building, which was home to Dr Mahathir from Aug 23, 1983, to Oct 10, 1999.

Once known as Sri Timah

and owned by Malaysia Mining Corporation (MMC), it was renamed Sri Perdana when the Government took over the building in August 1982 to make it the official residence of the former Prime Minister.

Following the move of the Federal Government administration to Putrajaya, Sri Perdana was handed over to the National Archives on Aug 3, 2000, for conservation and as a place of reference for researchers as well as a tourist destination.

The gallery, said Abdullah, would give people an insight into the lifestyle of Dr Mahathir and his wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

"If only walls could speak, they could tell all the bitter and sweet tales. Many incidents, meetings, activities and official visits by foreign leaders had taken place here."

Abdullah commended the National Archives' effort to conserve the building and Dr Mahathir's personal collections and artefacts.

"Dr Mahathir's success is plenty. We certainly know that success cannot be achieved in a short time.

"Everything takes time but

we must continue with policies that ensure Malaysia will continue to develop as a nation that is doing well and respected," he said, adding that Dr Mahathir's mission, practices and policies that had brought success must be maintained.

Abdullah said Malaysians should be grateful to the past leaders, from the first Prime Minister to the fourth.

"They were leaders of the rakyat. The people gave them the mandate to lead the country through the democratic process of general election. They are not dictators.

"They fulfilled the aspirations of the people to bring success to the country and the race."

Galeria Sri Perdana, covering 1.86ha, comprises three levels of exhibition area, an administrative block and a new building for souvenirs and a cafeteria.

There is also a corner depicting the story of Dr Mahathir. The gallery will be opened to the public from today. It will open from Tuesday to Friday, except public holidays. It will close on Mondays. For more information, call 03-20722663 or visit www.arkib.gov.my.