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Abdullah: Dr M bloomed in Umno

reports on "Umno General Assembly 2003" by Noor Adzman Baharudin; IN his speech asking Umno members not to make the party a racetrack where they seek wealth and power, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi also paid tribute to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The deputy president sprinkled his hour-long speech with well-chosen compliments for the party president and Prime Minister.

To the applause of delegates, Abdullah's first reference to Dr Mahathir was quite early in his speech when he said: "(We are) thankful that we have been blessed with the leadership of a statesman who has always considered above everything the fate of his people and the interests of the nation; Dr Mahathir has toiled and continues to toil for the party, for the Malays, for the nation and for Islam.

"He continues to speak out, to uphold justice, and to fight for the truth."

Abdullah's next reference came when he also paid tribute to previous leaders: Datuk Onn Jaafar, Tengku Abdul Rahman Putra, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein and Tun Hussein Onn.

On Dr Mahathir, Abdullah said: "Dr Mahathir gave true meaning to our independence by giving self-confidence and esteem to the Malays and Malaysians by making them a people and a nation respected by the rest of the world."

Abdullah, who is set to take over from Dr Mahathir as Prime Minister and Umno president, also expressed admiration for his boss' career when he said: "The Prime Minister's elevation as chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is a symbol of respect for Malaysians, for the country, and for Umno too.

"Umno is exceptionally proud because Dr Mahathir is a son of Umno.

"He bloomed and blossomed in the Umno garden. It was in Umno that he displayed his potential; and it was in Umno that he honed his leadership skills, learned and tasted the bitterness of drawbacks, and the sweetness of success.

"It was in Umno that he braved the storms of trial and tribulation; where he sharpened his understanding of the struggle; where he pressed forward step by step, where he rose, fell and rose again to eventually become Umno president, Prime Minister, an outstanding and exceptional statesman, and now, a leader of international standing."