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Individuals and organisations pay tribute to Dr Mahathir for his

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Various organisations and individuals today paid tribute to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for having served the country with such dedication for the last 22 years as the Prime Minister.

While some thanked him for his excellent leadership, others expressed regret that he had to retire although he could still serve the country in his present capacity.

At the same time they also congratulated and welcomed Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as the country's fifth Prime Minister.

Malaysian Trades Union Congress:

"We salute Dr Mahathir, the Father of Modern Malaysia, for his invaluable contributions and unparalleled achievements as a leader. It can be said that there practically exists no field of human endeavour in which Dr Mahathir has yet to participate, guide or lead. He is a leader well ahead of his time."

Universiti Utara vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Ahmad Fawzi Mohamed Basri:

"The campus community of UUM, though sad to see Dr Mahathir step down tomorrow, are grateful to him for his contributions to the university. Without Dr Mahathir, Sintok, which was formerly a communist haunt, would not have become the centre of knowledge."

Council of Churches of Malaysia:

"Dr Mahathir has been a very able leader and a statesman who not only looked after the interest of Malaysians but also brought pride to the nation on the international level. He was the driving force to transform Malaysia from an obscure nation to a rapidly industrialised country that has prided herself with political stability, economic prosperity, racial unity and inter-religious harmony. Dr Mahathir's stand on terrorism and his firm action in dealing with Islamic militancy and religious extremism has protected the nation from political instability. He will be fondly remembered as the father of Modern Malaysia."

Adjunct Professor Vin D'Cruz of the Asian Studies Centre at Melbourne's Monash University:

"Dr Mahathir is the first Asian leader to stand up and hit back at Western leaders who have a superiority complex. There were problems in the (Malaysia-Australia) relationship before him but it didn't have any punch to it. The punch has come since 1981. Dr Mahathir's basic criticism - that Australia had adopted the superior attitude of a colonial power looking down on its brown neighbours - had merit. Dr Mahathir also believed Australia's relationship with Asia centred on Australia's troubled relationship with its own past."

Singapore political observer Seah Chiang Nee:

"I think there's a lot of admiration among Singaporeans for Dr Mahathir's vision of a modern, multi-racial Malaysia and courage in pursuing it and, of course, his transformation of Malaysia into one of the most advanced nations in Southeast Asia. Many people were particularly full of praise for his actions against racial and religious extremism, his daring battle against feudal Sultans, for English language and 'backward' practices of the Malays."

Christian Federation of Malaysia:

"In the pursuit of progress, Dr Mahathir did not overlook spiritual and moral values. He has always been sensitive to the religious aspirations of

the various religious communities and always worked for respect, understanding and peaceful co-existence among the people."