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Preserving Dr M's legacy (HL)

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PUTRAJAYA, Sun. - Describing Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad as "Bapa Pemodenan Malaysia" (Father of Malaysia's Modernisation), Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi tonight said he was privileged to carry on his efforts to take Malaysia to greater heights.

The Prime Minister said the best way to preserve Dr Mahathir's legacy was to ensure that the nation's success was managed properly for future generations.

Abdullah said the challenges facing Dr Mahathir's successors, starting with him, were to consolidate the gains and great leaps that the nation had experienced under Dr Mahathir's leadership.

"That is the best way to preserve Tun Dr Mahathir's legacy to ensure that his efforts and sacrifices have not been in vain.

"Dr Mahathir is a man ahead of his time, a man whose thinking is frequently five or 10 years ahead of his fellow Malaysians. This quality has propelled Malaysia to great prosperity and laid the foundation for future growth.

"On behalf of the Malaysian Government, I wish to thank Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and pray that he and his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali is blessed with good health and a long life," Abdullah said at an appreciation dinner hosted by the Government for Dr Mahathir at the Putrajaya Convention Centre.

The dinner, graced by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Fauziah, was attended by more than 2,000 people, including ministers.

Abdullah, who expressed his admiration for Dr Mahathir's leadership and vision for the nation, said that during the 22 years the nation was under Dr Mahathir's helm it had undergone rapid changes which no one ever dared to think about.

"I have been inspired by his vision, dedication, discipline and tenacity. I know that he is averse to being idolised. He is uncomfortable with adulation and excessive praise, and that he accepts accolades with shyness and reluctance.

"However, I hope that he will allow us this opportunity to express our appreciation and gratitude for his contributions to the nation."

Working alongside Dr Mahathir in the Cabinet for 19 1/2 years, including as his deputy for almost five years, Abdullah said it had given him the cherished opportunity of observing the man at close quarters.

He said that from a commodity-dependent economy in the early 80's and a nation whose racial harmony and unity was still fragile, Dr Mahathir had successfully planned and carried out his vision for Malaysia.

"Now our success as a developing nation and as an Islamic nation is recognised by the whole world. We can see the legacy of Dr Mahathir everywhere," Abdullah said.

He said the former Prime Minister's strong stance and will-power in voicing his thoughts and ideas and his ability to share his vision with the people had infused a sense of pride and self-confidence in every Malaysian citizen.

"This mentality must be further nurtured and enhanced so that we could soar to greater heights from the foundation of success that was prepared by Dr Mahathir," he said.

Abdullah also took the opportunity to express deep appreciation to Dr Siti Hasmah who had never once complained about having to "lend" her husband to the country for 22 years.

"Her loyalty, support and love had enabled Tun Dr Mahathir to give full concentration on efforts to lead the country towards excellence," he said.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir thanked the Government for holding a grand dinner in appreciation of his services which he described as "small".

He thanked members of the Cabinet, the government's administration staff and the civil service in general for their unwavering support during his tenure as Prime Minister.

On the praise accorded to him, Dr Mahathir said that it was mainly due to the fact that he was given enough time to plan and implement the various policies of growth.

He said that similarly, Abdullah should be given sufficient time and solid support to ensure that he could plan and implement his ideas for the benefit of the nation.

"There is nothing that could be done overnight. If we decide today we cannot possibly see the results tomorrow, we are not God, we are normal human beings and we need time and give that precious time to the leaders whom we chose in our country.

"I'm thankful that I was given 22 years, if I have not been given time to plan maybe I would not have been successful in developing this beloved country of ours. Time is very important to ensure success," Dr Mahathir said to loud applause.

Dr Mahathir said that for him, job satisfaction was of paramount importance as it gave him the satisfaction which could not be matched with anything, including money.

"We will be very satisfied if what we planned is implemented successfully, it means more to me than tonnes of money. I wish to thank everyone for hosting this dinner in appreciation of my services," he added.