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### Prospering legacy

ON his final day as Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was conferred the nation's highest award at Istana Negara, thousands of Malaysians turned up at Putrajaya to bid farewell and foreign leaders sent glowing tributes. In fact, the bouquets were being proffered well before his official retirement. These gestures of thanks will no doubt continue, so indelible has been his mark on Malaysian society and beyond. That he is a much sought-after keynote speaker at international forums is testimony to the esteem in which he is held even after retirement.

The sceptics will no doubt dismiss these acts of homage as overblown attempts at glorification, something Dr Mahathir himself would baulk at. As Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said at the launch of Galeri Sri Perdana, "Dr Mahathir would not want to be worshipped, he was always uncomfortable when people acted as if they were idolising him." What Abdullah said of the gallery, that it "is not meant to idolise Dr Mahathir but for people to learn about his leadership", should apply to the praise lavished on him. As Abdullah also pointed out, great leaders should be measured by how they discharge their duties, not through buildings and monuments.

By any yardstick, Dr Mahathir deserves the acclaim and title of Bapa Pemodenan Malaysia for transforming the country from an agricultural backwater into a modern, industrialised economy. Building on these achievements to take the country to greater heights would ensure that Dr Mahathir's legacy finds a hallowed place in Malaysia's history.