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Sultan: Emulate Dr M

Alina Simon

ALOR STAR, Sun. - The Sultan of Kedah today described Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as a great statesman who will be dearly missed when he steps down from office at the end of the year.

Sultan Abdul Halim said Dr Mahathir was responsible for bringing development to Kedah and the State had benefited tremendously from his leadership.

"I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Federal Government, especially to Dr Mahathir, for taking a lot of interest in the development of the State," the Ruler said at an investiture ceremony in conjunction with his 75th birthday at Istana Anak Bukit today.

"I believe the person who succeeds Dr Mahathir will continue to establish a close relationship with the State Government for the good of Kedah and Malaysia."

The Sultan later presented the State's highest award, the Darjah Kerabat, to Dr Mahathir and Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah of Selangor.

Dr Mahathir was accompanied by wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

Sultan Abdul Halim also reminded the people not to take the peace and security in Malaysia for granted.

He urged the people to unite and not be misled by those who used religious and racial issues to create division and discord in society.

"If the rakyat are not united, the country can be easily colonised. History has shown how easy this can be achieved when leaders and the rakyat are at odds," he said.

"Colonisation is not confined just to military action, but also a country's economy," he added.

The Sultan later presented the Datuk Seri Setia Di Raja award to Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain and State Secretary Datuk Paduka Ismail Shafie.

Army Field Command chief of staff Brigadier-General Muslim Yusuf received the Datuk Setia Di Raja Kedah.

The ceremony, also attended by former Menteris Besar Tan Sri Paduka Osman Aroff and Tan Sri Sanusi Junid, saw 97 other recipients receiving awards and titles.

They include State Mufti Datuk Syeikh Hasbullah Abdul Halim and Customs director-general Datuk Abdul Halil Mutalib, who received the Datuk Paduka Seri Setia Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah award which carries the title Datuk Paduka.

The Darjah Kebesaran Gemilang Seri Mahkota Kedah Yang Amat Di Hormati was awarded to State Financial Officer Datuk Ku Nahar Ku Ibrahim, State Land and Mines Department director Datuk Hashim Mat Noor and Sarawak Securities Sdn Bhd chairman Datuk Onn Mahmud.

The award carries the title Datuk Wira.

A total of 37 people received the Datuk Setia Di Raja Kedah, which carries the title Datuk. They include Malaysian ambassador to Austria Gulam Husein Gulam Haniff, Malaysian ambassador to Syria Abdullah Sani Omar, State deputy police chief SAC II Mak Chee Onn and Kedah Development Board Berhad chief executive officer Dr Abdul Ghani Shafie.

The Sultan also presented 36 people with the Setia Di Raja Kedah award and the Bintang Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah to ASP Abdul Razak Mohd Yusoff of the Special Forces' para-training branch in Ulu Kinta, Perak.

Some 18 people were made Justice of Peace, including State Religious

Affairs Committee chairman Fadzil Hanafi, State Multimedia, Communications, Welfare and Women's Rights Committee chairman Rosnah Majid, Tunjang State Assemblyman Barishah @ Habshah Saad and Padang Serai Member of Parliament Lim Bee Kau.

Syed Razak, in his speech, called on the people to support the State Government and be proud of development in the State.

He said their support would spur the State Government in continuing to improve its performance.

Syed Razak said the State was experiencing a steady economic growth with the manufacturing and service sector recording the highest growth, followed by the agriculture sector.

"We expected the economic growth to increase from the forecast five per cent last year to at least 6.5 per cent this year as the private sector is becoming more energetic and dynamic," he said.

Syed Razak also praised the State and Federal civil servants for their co-operation in helping the State Government implement development plans.

He said the State Government would provide opportunities for members of the Kedah civil service to pursue their studies to further improve their knowledge.