

05/11/2003

Winning friends, influencing MPs

DATUK Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is poised to win many more friends and supporters through his humility. The nation watched how he mingled with village folk in Penaga and Kuala Ketil barely two days after being sworn in as Malaysia's fifth Prime Minister. On Monday, when addressing the Dewan Rakyat, Abdullah made no bones about the fact that he had his predecessor Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to thank for leaving a flourishing legacy on which he could build to extend the excellence, glory and distinction of the country.

A lot has already been said about Abdullah having had to fit into the big shoes of Dr Mahathir. Comparisons between the two are unnecessary and unmerited and the new Prime Minister, by his poise and sense of purpose has made that quite clear in his first few days in office, particularly when he emphasised how lucky he was to inherit the kind of political stability, national unity and economic prosperity now enjoyed by the country. All he has to do now, as he put it, is to work on these successes, promising at the same time to seek the co-operation of his Cabinet colleagues and all segments of society.

Abdullah's humility, too, has enabled the transition of power to be carried out as smoothly as we saw it. His pledge, with guidance from the Almighty, of a continued effort to enhance the excellence of the people through means tried by his predecessor based on the spirit of the Federal Constitution, the Rukunegara and Vision 2020 is clear testimony of the continuity he seeks.

In addition to the recognition he heaped on his predecessor, the Prime Minister has also made it clear that he is not losing focus on the aims and issues already dear to him when he was Deputy Prime Minister, such as the people's spiritual and mental development, the strengthening of the public sector and the fight against corruption.

It is perhaps this wisdom in dealing with the first few days in office that won him positive remarks from stalwarts in the Opposition bench, like Datuk Dr Hassan Ali of Pas and the DAP's Tan Seng Giaw and Kerk Kim Hock on Monday. It was significant indeed for Hassan, who is from a party known to thrive on its own brand of rigid religious doctrines, to describe Abdullah as a pious, God-fearing and humane person.