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Work with me, says Pak Lah (HL)

Noor Adzman Baharuddin

PENANG, Sat. - Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, in his maiden speech as Prime Minister, expressed his gratitude for inheriting an effective and successful Government that was on the path towards developed status following the gallant efforts of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

On his first visit to his home State after being sworn in, he urged a huge crowd at the old Penang airport in Bayan Lepas to work with him to continue the legacy of success.

"I owe my success to all of you. I will always remember that. I am also thankful to Dr Mahathir for leaving a successful Government. I am most grateful to inherit this Government, led by Dr Mahathir for 22 years, and I will strive hard to continue with the tradition of leading the nation based on co-operation between the different communities and on the concept of power sharing."

Abdullah urged the people to "work with me and not for me" as the Government aspires to bring the nation to greater heights.

His 20-minute speech was often interrupted by thunderous applause from the 30,000 crowd.

Accompanied by Datuk Seri Endon Mahmood, he arrived at 3.10pm accompanied by his two children, their spouses and grandchildren.

Dignitaries, led by Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, greeted the Prime Minister together with Cabinet Ministers, Menteri Besar, State leaders and Government officials.

"This Government is very effective and successful and one which has turned our country into one of the most developed among all developing countries. We are definitely blessed and grateful to our leader, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who has done a lot for us," Abdullah said.

He said his service in various capacities in the Government, in Barisan Nasional and in Umno under Dr Mahathir had helped him to understand the ex-Prime Minister's leadership style.

"To me, as his Cabinet Minister, or as a supreme council member under his leadership and as deputy president of the BN supreme council, all decisions are made and implemented through muafakat (consultation).

"Thus, all policies we have carried out are actually our policies... your policies, my policies and the policies of all leaders on this stage with me.

"This is because all of us contributed to the implementation of the policies formulated by Dr Mahathir. All policies were implemented successfully by not only the Government and party machinery, but, more importantly, they also received strong support from the people.

"I can never forget my success in becoming Prime Minister. It all began with your support for me as the candidate in Kepala Batas 25 years ago. There is no leader who can succeed without the support of party members, friends and the public at large.

"That was what happened to me ...if not, I could not have been a Member of Parliament, a Deputy Minister, a Minister and Prime Minister.

"With a deep sense of humility and appreciation, I thank you all for the support that you have given me," he said.

Of his political journey, he said it was an arduous one where he had to be patient, had experienced ups and downs and finally made it to the helm.

He gave an assurance that although he was very busy with his new job, "I will always make time for all of you".

He ended his speech with an energetic shout of Maju Malaysia and Berjaya Malaysia, which was echoed by the crowd.