

24 JUL 1996

Mahathir-Luncheon

POLITICS TAKE BACK SEAT AT GATHERING TO HONOUR PM

KUALA LUMPUR, July 24 (Bernama) -- Government and opposition leaders put aside political differences to gather here today to mark Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's 15th year in office.

Among the opposition leaders present at the "Premier Luncheon" were Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang, Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (S46) president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat.

Also there were Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) president Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan, DAP deputy chairman Karpal Singh, PAS deputy president Haji Abdul Hadi Awang and S46 deputy president Datuk Rais Yatim.

The luncheon was organised by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his Cabinet colleagues.

The Barisan Nasional (BN) component leaders present included MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) president Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, who is Sarawak Chief Minister, and Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) president Datuk Yong Teck Lee, who is Sabah Chief Minister.

Corporate leaders, former ministers and senior government officers led by Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid were also there to extend their greetings to Dr Mahathir.

Also at the Renaissance Kuala Lumpur Hotel for the occasion were his daughter Marina and sons Mirzan, Mokhzani and Mukhriz and their wives.

Anwar and his wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail greeted Dr Mahathir and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali when they arrived at the hotel.

The Prime Minister and his wife then exchanged greetings with the Cabinet ministers and their wives who had lined up to receive them.

Dr Mahathir entered the hall to the strains of gamelan music.

The ceremony began with a speech by Anwar pledging his loyalty as well

as that of Cabinet members, menteri besar, chief ministers and all government staff to the Prime Minister.

Those present were entertained by singers Yusni Hamid and Salimah Mahmood and violinist Mat Long from Perlis. The RTM Orchestra led by Mokhzani Mahmud was in attendance.

There was also a video-clip presentation on "Perjuangan Mu Yang Belum Selesai" (Your Unfinished Struggle) depicting Dr Mahathir's struggle, leadership agenda and successes in his 15 years at the helm.

The guests gave a loud applause at the end of the presentation and then proceeded to sing the "Setia" song.

In a spontaneous response, Dr Mahathir then stood up and made a brief speech thanking those present and saying he was touched by the reception given him.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by Anwar, then cut a cake in the shape of the KLCC building. Anwar also presented him a souvenir.

Dr Mahathir, 70, succeeded Tun Hussein Onn as Prime Minister on July 16

1981. -- BERNAMA

HS RAZ YBY