

PM hails a humble leader

KUALA LUMPUR: The most humble of leaders, a respected statesman and one who had touched so many lives.

These were among the words used by the Prime Minister in his glowing tribute to the late Tun Ghafar Baba.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Ghafar's death was an irreplaceable loss to the country and the people.

The former Deputy Prime Minister and Umno stalwart would always be remembered as the most humble of leaders who had served the country for almost all of his life, said Abdullah.

Extending his condolences to Ghafar's family, he added: "I appreciate and am thankful to his family for allowing him to

sacrifice a considerable part of his life to serve the nation; the race and Umno.

The people and I are saddened over the passing of a respected statesman who had contributed immensely to the country, the people, Umno and the Barisan Nasional.

"Today, we are mourning the passing of a great leader who had struggled for the nation and the people since the days before independence," Abdullah said at the National Mosque here, where Ghafar was laid to rest at its Heroes' Mausoleum.

The Prime Minister said Ghafar had touched so many lives. "He was always willing to serve the people, irrespective of their social status, race

and religion."

Abdullah, who is Umno president and Barisan Nasional head, said the late Ghafar had been loyal to the party.

"He remained steadfast to Umno, in both good and lean times, as an ordinary member or when holding important positions in the party and the government."

Abdullah would move in the Dewan Rakyat today a motion of condolence to Ghafar's family as well as a motion of thanks for his contributions to the country.

Speaking to *Bernama*, Abdullah said the veteran politician was known to be "a sensitive voice to the views of the ordinary folk and people at the grassroots."