

THE STAR

DATE: 28/01 / 2008

Pak Lah pays tribute to Suharto

The Star - 28/1/2008

Najib and Musa to represent Malaysia at funeral

PETALING JAYA: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has extended his heartfelt condolences to the family of the late former Indonesian president Suharto and the Indonesian people.

Paying tribute to Suharto for helping to strengthen ties between Indonesia and Malaysia, the Prime Minister said his passing was a great loss to both countries.

"Malaysia valued highly the role played by Suharto in enhancing bilateral relations," he said.

"The (cordial) relations have yielded immense benefits to both countries. We pray to Allah to bless Pak Harto's soul and to place him

among the blessed," he told reporters on his return from Davos, Switzerland, where he attended the World Economic Forum annual meeting.

He also announced that Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and former deputy prime minister Tun Musa Hitam would represent Malaysia at the funeral today.

Suharto, 86, died of multiple organ failure at the Pertamina Hospital in Jakarta yesterday where he had undergone treatment since Jan 4.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in paying tribute to Suharto, said

Malaysia was indebted to him for his role in ending the Indonesian Confrontation against Malaysia after he became president.

"We looked up to him as a great leader and as an international statesman. For me, it's quite personal. I know him and I have worked with him for a very long time.

"I regarded him as a friend of Malaysia and a personal friend," said the former prime minister.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia valued Suharto's efforts to end the Confrontation initiated in 1962 by his predecessor Sukarno.

He credited Suharto for playing a major role in the development of

Indonesia, which has more than 13,000 islands and a population of 200 million.

"Even though Indonesia was not an ideal democracy during Suharto's time, the fact remained that he brought stability to Indonesia. Of course, there is a price to be paid," he said, acknowledging that some people had suffered under Suharto's administration.

Najib said Malaysia was deeply saddened by Suharto's death.

"Suharto's move to end the Confrontation helped stabilise the region and Malaysia against the communist threat.

"We are indebted to Pak Harto."

»Malaysia valued highly the role played by Suharto in enhancing bilateral relations«

DATUK SERI ABDULLAH AHMAD BADAWI