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Tun Razak our greatest PM: Siti Hasmah

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KUALA LUMPUR: The late Tun Abdul Razak Hussein was the country's greatest prime minister ever, said Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali.

In paying tribute to the nation's second prime minister, the wife of former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Tun Razak was responsible for developing the nation from the grassroots level especially in the rural areas.

"I had first-hand experience of witnessing Tun Razak's five-year development plan for Malaysia, the first development plan for the nation back then. It has helped to improve the public healthcare standard in rural areas," said Siti Hasmah during a lecture on public health at the Perdana University in Serdang yesterday.

She said Tun Razak was also responsible for eradicating poverty by executing Malaysia's first development plan from 1965-1970.

"He walked the talk. He earned the respect of the people and government staff. I remember he said, 'Treat people with respect and people in return would respect what you are trying to do for them'," she told *theSun* after the event.

Recalling her time as Kedah's first woman doctor, Siti Hasmah said Tun Razak was instrumental in paving the way for better health awareness among the rural folk.

"If not for the development programmes carried out by Tun Razak, we may not enjoy what we have today," she said.

She also spoke about the challenges of dealing with bomoh and village midwives.

"My teams had to train 'bidan' or midwives. We cycled from house to house to offer our services to expectant and new mothers.

"The people in Kubang Pasu, Pendang, Jerlun and many other places in Kedah knew me very well. In 1974, instead of nominating me, the Kubang Pasu people nominated my husband.

"If they had nominated me, I would have been Kedah MB a long time ago," she quipped, drawing applause from the audience.