

Reports by FARIK ZOLKEPLI, YUEN MEIKENG, RAHIMY RAHIM, ALLISON LAI and JUSTIN ZACK

**PETALING JAYA:** He was known as Mr Clean and came as a breath of fresh air after the tumultuous 22-year tenure of his predecessor, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Calling on the people to “Work with me, not work for me”, he led Barisan Nasional to one of its biggest wins in the 2004 general election, winning 198 out of 219 seats.

Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who passed away yesterday, was a prime minister who never lost his touch with the common folk.

He was just as comfortable in the corridors of power as he was in the village warung.

Pak Lah, as he was known, was

# Farewell to Mr Clean

a deeply religious man who advocated Islam Hadhari, or civilisational Islam.

He was also a man who wanted to see economic development in all corners of the country.

To that end, he started five economic corridors - the East Coast Economic Region, Northern Corridor Economic Region, Iskandar Malaysia, Sabah Development Corridor and Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy.

His rise to power was also difficult. In 1987, he had supported Tun Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who were in Team B, which lost in the Umno elections. He was later sacked from his Cabinet post as defence minister.

However, after Umno was deregistered in the 1987 crisis, he chose to stay with Umno Baru and did not join Tengku Razaleigh’s Semangat 46.

Although overshadowed by current Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim after that, he was back in 1999, when Umno underwent another crisis.

Dr Mahathir picked him as his deputy. Pak Lah then went on to be Umno president and prime minister.

Sadly, despite his huge win in 2004, Pak Lah was also at the helm when Barisan lost its two-thirds majority for the first time

in the 2008 general election.

As opposition rose within Umno, he stepped down in 2009, making way for Datuk Seri Najib Razak to become the next prime minister.

Since his retirement, he had kept a low profile, keeping his opinions on the country’s leadership to himself, although he served in many different other roles, both locally and internationally.

Yesterday, when he passed, the country was shocked. Not many had known that he was so ill.

He had been the quiet, no-fuss, soft-spoken leader to the end.