

5.07pm: End of an era of 22 years  
of Dr Mahathir's leadership

# CHEER AND TEARS

MM 1/11/2003 - 2 PRECISE

THE magnificent view of Putrajaya reflected one of the successes of what Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has done for the country the past 22 years.

The skies were clear as Malaysia's new Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi walked into his new office.

Hundreds of employees at the Prime Minister's Department waited under the blazing sun for more than an hour, just to get a glimpse of the momentous handshake between the past and future leaders.

Media representatives were also in full force in a bid to get that perfect shot of Dr M and his wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, as they were leaving the office.

Pak Lah and the new First Lady, Datuk Seri Endon Mahmood, walked through the gates at 4.30pm and were greeted with a warm welcome and friendly smiles.

They went to the fifth floor of the Pejabat Perdana Menteri at Bangunan Perdana Putra, where Dr M handed files to Pak Lah to mark the handover.

Then, about 20 minutes later, at 5.07pm, Dr M clocked out as Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister for the last time before walking out to greet the people.

It was almost uncontrollable as the crowds surged forward together with the media photographers and the guards tried

By RITA JONG

to keep order.

Tears of sadness and loud cries were also heard. To many present, Dr Mahathir was not only Malaysia's Father of Modernisation but also their boss whom they had grown fond of.

Salehuddin Mohamad, who has been working with Dr Mahathir for 21 years, said he felt a great loss.

"No other leader will be like him," he said. Salehuddin thanked Dr Mahathir for his contribution and at the same time, congratulated the new Prime Minister.

Noraziniy Ariffin, 22, said she was sad that Dr Mahathir was retiring.

"Although I have only worked under him for two years, I feel the loss. He had made such an impact on so many lives," she said.

"I just want to wish him a happy retirement and wish him well with his wife and family."

Sabahan Mohd Halikin Angga brought his whole family there to bid farewell to Dr Mahathir yesterday.

Together with his two sons, aged five and three, Halikin came to Kuala Lumpur three months ago to witness the last days of Dr Mahathir's leadership.



Dr Mahathir shaking hands with the people as he made his way through the sea of well-wishers bidding him farewell

Picture: ZAMAN HURI ISA

Thank you, Dr Mahathir; welcome, Pak Lah!

"THANK YOU, Dr M, Welcome Pak Lah" This simple message on flying banners at Istana Negara summed up the appreciation of 22 million Malaysians to Tim Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

At Istana Negara yesterday afternoon, Dr Mahathir officially stepped down as the nation's leader while Abdullah became the new, fifth Prime Minister.

The Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the Raja Permaisri Agong presided over the formalities. Also present were the Chief Justice, Cabinet Ministers and other dignitaries.

"I am sad that he is leaving, but I would like to thank him for all the great things he has done. Congratulations, too, to our new Prime Minister," he said.

As the day wore on, the sky grew darker as if Mother Nature, too, was sad a great man stepping down.

While the charismatic leader will be dearly missed, yesterday also marked a new beginning for Pak Lah.

Dr Mahathir managed to put on a smile all the time, although one could feel that he was sad.

Probably he knew that he has done well, and that Malaysia will do just fine.

And as he turned around to wave that last goodbye before getting into his car, rousing shouts of 'Hail Dr Mahathir' were heard.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad may have stepped down, but his legacy will live on.



Halikin holding Mohd Mahathir, five, and Mohd Amin Shah, three, waiting to personally thank Dr Mahathir before he left



BACAAN DOA: Abdullah with Dr Siti Hasmah



FAREWELL: Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah leaving Istana Negara