

A living tribute to Dr M

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As a politician, I know only too well how it feels not to make the politically popular moves. But politics is also moved by principles and ideas based on long-term well-being.

— Addressing the Japanese Economic Organisations in Tokyo, January 1983.

Foreign investment must be accompanied by a decent dose of technology transfer, without which the broad policy objective of foreign investments will not be meaningful.

— Addressing the Japanese Economic Organisations in Tokyo, January 1983.

Galeria Perdana, which houses gifts and mementos presented to Datuk Seri Dr



Mahathir Mohamad, offers visitors an insight into the life and accomplishments of the PM.

ABDUL RAZAK AHMAD writes.

A PERVASIVE SENSE OF OUR outgoing Prime Minister's presence permeates each corridor, hall and exhibition space at Galeria Perdana in Langkawi.

Visitors can almost expect Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad himself to appear around the next corner while exploring the 5,332.74 square-metre facility which houses many of the gifts, souvenirs and awards presented to him.

The sensation is due to the items on display. They provide a rare opportunity for the public to gain an intimate glimpse, not only into the life and accomplishments of the Prime Minister, but the acknowledgments and tributes paid to him by world leaders.

While other facilities established to house the personal effects or gifts to previous Prime Ministers were made after they passed away, Galeria Perdana was set up and opened while Dr Mahathir is still Prime Minister.

It is, literally, a living tribute to a leader credited for transforming Malaysia into a modern and harmonious nation.

"Galeria Perdana is unique. While other similar facilities are memorials displaying the personal effects of past Prime Ministers, this is a gallery which is exclusively meant to showcase all the gifts given to Dr Mahathir," says Mahani



MAHANI: Galeria Perdana is unique



EVER HELPFUL: The staff at Galeria Perdana





DR MAHATHIR'S WHEELS: Visitors to Galeria Perdana admiring the various bicycles presented to the PM

Our 'Look East' policy, in essence, is a call to return to the self-help philosophy of our earlier era: it re-emphasises the need to pull ourselves up by our own hardwork, determination and initiative.

— Addressing the Japanese Economic Organisations in Tokyo, January 1983.

If our children grow up believing that taking drugs is a terrible crime which is worse than stealing or robbing, then they will stay away from drugs.

— Launching the National Anti-Drug campaign, February 1983.

Collection keeps growing

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Muhammad, who manages the gallery. "If you take into account the fact that Dr Mahathir is one of the longest-serving leaders in the world, the amount and range of items we have on display can be considered massive by any standard."

Mahani herself is not sure of the exact number of items housed in the facility, which is divided into two two-storey blocks on a site situated in Kilim, Air Hangat.

Her best estimate is that there are currently over 1,500 items.

Only rare and unique gifts, or those which have special significance — such as paintings and mementos expressing support to Dr Mahathir for his role as championing the cause of the developing world, for instance — are put on show.

To include every gift and award given to the Prime Minister would have resulted in a display of over 50,000 items.

There is silverware and porcelain statues, dolls, photographs, paintings, miniature musical instruments, intricate handicrafts drawings, dinnerware, vases, cars, model aeroplanes and even a full-sized Sauber Petronas F1 car replica. And many, many more.

"The collection keeps getting bigger as we expand the facility, so visitors can expect even more in future," she says.

There are plans to hold activities at Galeria Perdana for students, and to include more information about the context in which each gift was presented.

These efforts are needed because Galeria Perdana is a popular tourist destination which draws large and growing numbers of visitors.

Over 270,000 visitors went to Galeria Perdana last year, and the figure this year so far stands at 165,455 — with 29,596 people

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KEEN MIND: A young visitor to Galeria Perdana at the space dedicated to automotive and aerospace-related items

Yes, we must preserve our natural beauty, but we cannot live in attap huts so that a few wandering hippies can commune with nature.

— On the potential of the tourism industry, December 1984.

In the democratic system, the wealth of the rakyat is the wealth of the nation, and the wealth of the nation is the wealth of the rakyat.

— At the handing over of a donation to the Malaysian Red Crescent Society and 16 welfare organisations, April 1983.



UNIQUE GIFT: A Sauber Petronas F1 car on display at Galeria Perdana

A popular attraction

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visiting last month alone.

The popularity of the venue is understandable.

A visit to Galeria Perdana offers a unique insight into the world, as seen through the eyes of Dr Mahathir during his many trips abroad.

The gifts and souvenirs presented by foreign leaders to the Prime Minister symbolise certain aspect of their country's culture and history, for many of the objects are works of art crafted by artists.

It makes for an impressive collection, and visitors come away with a sense that the collection has been offered for public viewing as a gift by our retiring Prime

Minister, perhaps as a show of gratitude for all the support we have shown him.

That feeling is further reaffirmed because while many of the gifts featured in Galeria Perdana were presented to Dr Mahathir by heads of states and foreign leaders, also featured are the gifts and tokens of appreciation by ordinary Malaysians.

The gold-plated dinnerware and expensive cars may obtain pride of place in the collection at Galeria Perdana, but so too the colourful drawings saying "Thank You PM", produced by schoolchildren.

All this contributes towards making Galeria Perdana a very special place to visit.

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