

Mahathir Arrives In New York To Receive 2012 Rafik Hariri UN-Habitat Memorial Award

Bernama

September 28, 2012

By Nani Rahayu Yusof

NEW YORK, Sept 28 (Bernama) -- Former Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has arrived here to receive the 2012 Rafik Hariri UN-Habitat Memorial Award, the presentation of which is scheduled for Friday.

He was accompanied by his wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

Dr Mahathir, 87, was named winner of the award in June by the award's steering committee in recognition of his leadership, statesmanship and good governance.

The award, named after the late prime minister of Lebanon, Rafik Hariri, was established by the Hariri family jointly with the UN-Habitat through the Rafik Hariri Foundation in March 2009.

It is given to individuals, organisations or institutions worldwide for significant accomplishments in the areas of leadership, statesmanship and good governance; construction and reconstruction of settlements and communities; human resource development; and benevolent activities in fighting urban poverty and the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

The previous winner of the award was the Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was also recognised in the category of leadership, statesmanship and good governance, especially during his time as Mayor of Istanbul in the mid-1990s when he hosted the second UN Conference on Human Settlements. It led to the establishment of UN-Habitat as a fully-fledged UN programme tasked with promoting adequate shelter for all.

Nazek Rafik Hariri, widow of Rafik Hariri and president of the Rafik Hariri Foundation, had said during the announcement of the winner that her husband was very impressed with the achievements of Dr Mahathir.

"Their relationship was based on the shared interests of building confidence and economic success for their respective nations," she said.

The late Lebanese prime minister had visited Malaysia several times while he was in office. In September 2004, Rafik Hariri, who held office five times, was recognised with the UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour, Special Citation, the highest United Nations award granted for achievements in the field of human settlement.

UN-Habitat scientific advisor Prof Banji Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, speaking on behalf of the steering committee, had described Dr Mahathir as "a remarkable individual who did remarkable things for his country".

"Malaysia was on its way to considerable economic progress during Mahathir's time. It is recognised that he significantly influenced all other developing countries on how it was possible to develop in a very rapid way in a very short time," he had said.

The international jury chairperson Mervat Tallawy had said: "The per capita income in Malaysia during his (Mahathir's) time increased eight times. The model of thinking to get out of problems and crises was almost the same as that of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri."

A UN-Habitat statement released during the announcement had attributed Malaysia's rapid modernisation and economic progress to Dr Mahathir.

"He was a dominant political figure who won five consecutive general elections and remains an active political figure during his retirement," it had said.

Dr Mahathir's political career spanned almost 40 years, with 22 of them in the capacity of prime minister between 1981 and 2003.

Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah arrived here Thursday on a four-day official visit to the United States, and were welcomed at the Teterboro Airport in New Jersey by Malaysian Ambassador to the United States Datuk Othman Hashim and his wife, Datin Rohayazam Kamarulzaman, and later greeted at their hotel in New York by Malaysian Consul-General Syed Bakri Syed Abdul Rahman.

Dr Mahathir is expected to meet with Malaysian students from New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania on Saturday while Dr Siti Hasmah will be meeting with the ladies at Malaysia's permanent mission to the UN here.

-- BERNAMA

Copyright © 2012 BERNAMA

Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v6/newsindex.php?id=697934>