

My mentor, my friend

TO many people, Dr Mahathir might seem a hard man, even *cengis* (fierce), but there is the softer side to the man, the caring side, that only those close to him, like Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, know about.

When his wife Datin Paduka Seri Endon Mahmood was diagnosed with cancer, Abdullah says Dr Mahathir would always ask about her health and welfare.

Abdullah has also noticed that Dr Mahathir never failed to visit any friend who fell sick or was hospitalised.

"There are so many fond memories of our time together that I don't think I can pinpoint one that is special," he says when asked what he considered as the fondest memory of his relationship with Dr Mahathir to date.

"We worked very well together," adds Abdullah of his tenure as Deputy Prime Minister. "We worked very closely in Umno and Barisan Nasional too."

Dr Mahathir, he says, is a very hard working leader who never seems to tire.

Of Dr Mahathir's many good qualities, Abdullah thinks the best are his superb time management and his ability to do many things at one time, and do them very well too.

"There are many things that I admire about him that inspire me. His dedication is one. He was a very dedicated leader and I could see that he liked his job tremendously.

"He also told me once, and I still remember it today, that two heads are better than one; which means that if I find difficulties in deciding on something, it is always good to consult someone else, to get differing views on the issue. On that basis, whatever decision made, will be the best," he says.

The close camaraderie that he enjoyed with Dr Mahathir as his deputy would be the thing that he would miss the most now.

"He has always been there to give me a helping hand. As a leader, he has been very helpful." - **by SA'ODAH ELIAS**