

MAHATHIR OF MALAYSIA

ROBIN ADSHEAD

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Foreword

My readers may wish to know my qualifications and reasons for writing this book.

As a British officer of Gurkhas, I served in Malaysia during the Emergency, and later, as an Army pilot, I flew helicopters in Peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak during Confrontation. To me, Malaysia was "home" during so many of my most formative years that covered the period before and after the coming of "Merdeka". Since then I have been a photographer and writer, travelling on assignments all over the world.

My reasons for writing this book are varied. One was a strong desire to come back to Malaysia and to observe, as a photojournalist of twenty years' standing, what had happened in the years I had been away. Another was a need, deep-felt, to contribute something personal to Malaysia, which had given so much to me in the way of experience.

The most immediate reason became apparent when I was first introduced to Dr. Mahathir. I felt at once that I had met a truly honest person, incapable of deceit, who was sincerely committed to the goal of improving the condition of his country and its people. It seemed to me that such honesty is impossible to be understood by devious minds, and that his single-mindedness of aim would naturally be attacked by those critics with a self-interest to be served.

If this portrait of the Prime Minister seems to the reader to be stressed in his favour, it is because I believe him to be a man of shining integrity, underestimated by many of his countrymen and the Western world alike, a

Alongside the new, however, many of the older, traditional ways are still observed, harking back to the days when Kedah was an Unfederated Malay State within British-ruled Malaya. To be a Malay in pre-war Kedah implied a rural existence, living close to the land. The land was ploughed, the rice planted, grown and harvested, and the ploughing begun again. The rhythms of life were slow and measured, under the sun and the timely rains.

Tradition was everything, in religion, in customs, in schooling and in prospects for life. In the schools where teaching was in Malay, education was confined to primary levels, up to Standard Four. Secondary education was available only in the English-language schools, which although open to all, were attended only by the brighter students, who were able to pass the formidable entrance examination. For those who could not pass this examination, it meant the end of their formal education, and their working life had to begin while their cleverer friends went on to a better chance in life. Even for a pupil of the English-language school, the best career that he could hope for, as a young Malay, would be as a clerk in some form of government office. Business was generally in the hands of the Chinese or Indian shopkeepers, who seldom, if ever, employed Malays in any position where they could learn business principles.

Although the Malays were governed by their traditions, they were in no way a spiritless people. It takes more than mere spirit, however, to overcome the inertia of habit. In the case of the boy Mahathir, born on 20th December 1925 into the large and loving family of Encik Mohamad Iskandar and his wife Cik Wan Tempawan binti Cik Wan Hanapi, it may have been the combination of his strict but kindly upbringing as the youngest of nine children, and the high educational standards of his father. Encik Mohamad had been appointed a headmaster in 1908, and was the first



This portrait of Dr. Mahathir's father, Encik Mohamad Iskandar who played such an influential part in moulding the character of the future Prime Minister, still hangs on the wall of the little house in Jalan Sebarang Perak in Alor Setar where Mahathir spent his boyhood. (*Robin Adshead*)

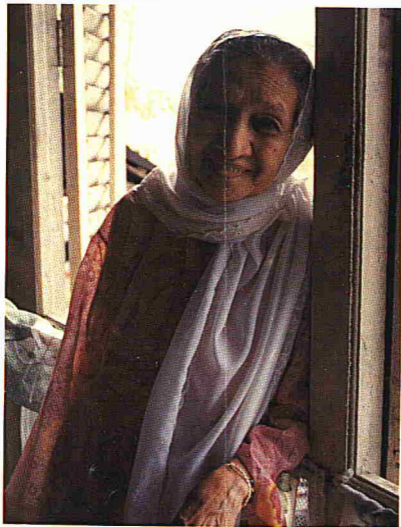
Malay headmaster of an English-language school in Kedah. From this position of great prestige within his community, he was able to exercise a formidable and personal influence over the future lives of several

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generations of boys from Kedah, including those of his sons.

Mahathir, the youngest of nine children, was the darling of the family. They nicknamed him "Che Det", "Che" being a semi-formal title to give the child a sense

Cik Rafeah binti Mohamad, one of the Prime Minister's elder sisters. (*Robin Adshead*)





Cik Habsah binti Mohamad, another of Dr. Mahathir's elder sisters. All the family learnt very early on that the young Mahathir always knew precisely what he wanted to do, and that it was easier to let him do it in his own way than to obstruct him in his purpose. (*Robin Adshead*)

of self-respect and an acknowledgement of his own standing within the loving family that surrounded him, and "Det" a familiar shortening of the last syllable of his name. His immediate family still call him by this pet

name. His personality was a strong one, right from the beginning of his life; even today, his older sisters recall that he was a wilful boy, determined to have his own way because he knew exactly what he wanted. The whole family learned that in the end, the easiest thing to do was to let young Mahathir do things his own way, which he had already carefully worked out for himself.

Even with this tolerance, there was no way for Mahathir to become spoilt. His father saw to that. The headmaster, already 40 years old by the time his youngest son was born, laid down a well-established discipline within the household, exactly in line with his supervision of his school pupils. In his youth, Encik Mohamad had had great difficulty obtaining an English-language education. Only his determination and personal discipline enabled him to study at a time when the feeling among Malay (Muslim) parents was that the Christian missionary schools would subvert their Islamic faith.

Encik Mohamad was among the first Malays to break traditions in order to better himself, and he passed on these deep convictions of the importance of education and of success to his children. He took a keen personal interest in his children's education, frequently supervising their homework and teaching them English and mathematics. All his sons were expected to work hard at their studies in order to improve their chances in life. It was a serious business for them all, but more so for Mahathir, who was a natural hard worker determined to succeed at all costs.

As the youngest child, Mahathir was very close to his mother, Wan Tempawan, and remained so until her death in 1966. She was never in the best of health, but devoted herself to her children, ensuring that she tutored them in the basic tenets of Islam. Mahathir was later instructed in higher spiritual values by a religious teacher, Encik Zakaria, and the precepts he learnt so early in his life remain a staunch foundation of

his character. Through the teachings of Islam, Dr. Mahathir has learnt to be tolerant of other races and religions, to resist fanaticism and to be faithful to his beliefs.

His secular education was begun in the Malay school close to his house in Jalan Seberang Perak, on the outskirts of Alor Setar, where he was born. Within the discipline imposed by his father, he studied hard, and easily passed the entrance examination for the Government English School, now renamed Sultan Abdul Hamid College (Maktab Sultan Abdul Hamid). "Gaining a place there," says Dr. Mahathir, "made me feel that I was a cut above my former schoolmates from the Malay primary school, but as all my four elder brothers had gone to English schools, I was not too swollen-headed about my admittance."

He settled easily into English-language education and managed to stay high in the class lists, often coming top of his class. The school was a near-exact transplant from the British educational system, making the boys wear a neat uniform and the school badge and teaching them to play team games such as cricket, football and rugby. Dr. Mahathir, looking back at his schooldays, says "I was never very good at football. They tried me at cricket, and although I made a success of fielding on one occasion, I never took to the game. I did learn to play rugby though, and enjoyed it."

He did not at that time harbour any great ambition. Although two of his brothers were sent for higher education in Kuala Lumpur, he thought that at best he might end up as a clerk. As he progressed in school, he thought of gaining a scholarship to study in England, the ultimate goal of those boys studying in English schools. At the very least, he thought, an 'English' education would guarantee him a place in the Government service.

"He was a popular boy in school," remembers his cousin Haji Mukti bin Kassim, "but he chose his own

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friends, and always selected them from among the brightest boys in his class." Haji Mukti stayed with Mahathir's family during the school holidays, as there was no one at home to coach him. Mahathir's father was Mukti's uncle, and would include his nephew in the homework circle in the holidays, giving Mukti the extra tuition and imposing the regular study habits that enabled him to stay level with his class. As Mukti recalls, "Mahathir was not allowed by his father to leave the compound of the house, even in the daytime, and could only play games such as marbles, tops or kites with the neighbourhood children if they came over to his house. Even when his father bought him a small bicycle, he could only ride it within the compound of the house. His father was a very strict man. When we were doing our homework, he would sit on the sofa, smoking his pipe and reading the paper. We could ask him anything, and he would help us, but he insisted on our working for regular periods, with breaks for tea and dinner, and then back to work." Mukti remembers his young friend and cousin as being hard-working and studious, and thought that he would follow in his father's footsteps to become a teacher.

Haji Mukti's memories also reflect the little house in Jalan Sebarang Perak as being a happy place, filled with books, all of which were sadly destroyed during the Japanese occupation. Today, the house, a typical stilt-borne wooden house roofed with attap in the Malay kampung style, is still lived in by members of the Prime Minister's family, and continues to echo with the laughter of children.

Rules at school were strict. The boys were made to speak only English, even among themselves. The penalty for speaking Malay was a fine of one cent per word. Other punishments included detention. In spite of these restrictions, Haji Mukti recalls his school days with his cousin as being very happy.

These happy days came to an abrupt halt in 1942,



This is the traditional Malay house, built on stilts and roofed with *attap*, where Dr. Mahathir was raised. His father would not allow him to play outside the compound, and Mahathir's friends had to visit him there in such free time as he had between his sessions of supervised homework. Relations of the Prime Minister still live in the house. (*Robin Adshead*)

when the Japanese Army occupied Malaya. The rule of the British, which had seemed so permanent, was ended overnight. The only schools allowed to operate were Japanese-language schools, a sharp contrast with Malaysian schools today, where Japanese is a popular but voluntary optional language, keenly studied by future Malaysian business people. At that time, however, there was nothing voluntary about life in a Japanese school, and young Mahathir's access to his father's extensive English library ended when all English-language books were ordered to be destroyed.

For a time, Mahathir attended such a Japanese-language school, but left before he could retain any lasting knowledge of Japanese. Thrown on his own

resources, Mahathir tried first to get a job with a Chinese rubber trader. Although this man was the father of a school friend, he would not employ a Malay, so Mahathir decided to start his business career by joining with two friends to open a coffee stall. He tried to sell his coffee and cakes in the Japanese canteen, but was thrown out and forced to sell in the local market instead.

Mahathir was not alone in facing hardship and poverty. His brothers and cousins were retrenched by the Japanese from the relatively comfortable jobs they had held in Government service as clerks, and were forced to hawk fruit along the roadsides. In Mahathir's own words, "their lack of knowledge was pitiful, and they had difficulty making a living."

He, on the other hand, discovered himself to be adept at business, eventually selling his coffee stall for a small profit and replacing it with a more lucrative business selling bananas.

From this early start in rudimentary business techniques, he learnt many vital lessons that stand him in good stead today; for instance, the overall importance in business of knowing other businessmen. Business, he discovered, is done through making contacts. In his words, "If they don't know you, they don't do business with you."

"My education had not prepared me for poverty," says Dr. Mahathir of those far-off, but never forgotten days. It was poverty that drove him on, making him feel that "the weakness of the Malays (in business) needed to be corrected so as to have the same standard of living as the non-Malays."

By the time the war ended and he was able to resume his schooling, he had matured in both his sense of purpose and in his determination to be part of the mechanism of change for the Malays. His market experience had clearly shown him the need to acquire business skills as a means of escaping the poverty trap, and the only way by which the Malays could improve

their economic standards. He made up his mind to enter politics and to do what he could, both for his own people and for his country.

The Japanese occupation is said by Dr. Mahathir to be the most significant event in his life. Until then, he had visualised a life that differed little from that of his brothers and friends. He had considered completing the secondary English school education and then joining Government service either after some form of higher education or by working in the clerical services. The Japanese occupation changed that future radically. It became less certain, and at the age of 16 he was left to fend for himself.

When the British returned, he thought that he would resume his interrupted life much as he had originally pictured it. At that time, the division between the communities and their economic roles, and the de facto 'colonisation' by the British were thought by the majority of the Malayan people to be the natural state of affairs. Only a few radicals among Malay school-teachers felt anti-British sentiment strong enough to contemplate independence. Yet even as a schoolboy, Mahathir did not take things for granted, and felt the urge to question the status quo. He realised that when the British came back the Malays were likely to be pushed even further into the economic background. The upshot of all these events was to propel him into politics even as he struggled to complete his education.

His return to education was made difficult by the shortage of books, though these were eventually provided by the Government. Despite these difficulties, Mahathir once more applied himself to his studies and was rewarded by passing the Senior Cambridge (School Certificate) examination which enabled him to apply for higher education at the University of Malaya in Singapore.

While he finished his secondary education, he became involved in politics. The British, on their return to

Malaya, had introduced the idea of the Malayan Union, discarding what Dr. Mahathir now describes as "the charade of a 'protected state'". They set out to rule the Malay States directly as a colony, acknowledging Chinese and Indians who had come to Malaya to work and do business as equal citizens of a Malayan British Colony comprising all the Malay Peninsular States and the British settlements of Penang and Malacca. This was seen by the Malays as a direct threat to all their aspirations to a better economic prospect, and there were many demonstrations against the setting-up of the Malayan Union.

Mahathir led a group of school friends in organising and participating in anti-Malayan Union activities. After registering the Kesatuan Melayu Kedah and the Kesatuan Pemuda Melayu Kedah, he joined a reformist organisation, Saberkas, and attended as an observer the congress of Malay organisations from which stemmed the existence of UMNO, the United Malays National Organisation. The Kesatuan Melayu Kedah became part of UMNO in 1946, and Mahathir became one of the earliest members of UMNO. His father, being a Government employee, was not allowed to take part in politics, but this was not to say he did not support his son in his early political activity, and he even provided Mahathir with financial support to publish anti-Malayan Union posters and pamphlets.

Mahathir's political career was therefore launched while he was still at school. In his forthright way Mahathir looked at the long term position, and recognised that he must become someone of importance and high standing within his own community if his political aspirations were to be realised. Two professions would enable him to do this: law and medicine. Looking back, Dr. Mahathir says: "Although I was keen on getting a legal or medical qualification for its own sake, that keenness was augmented by my need to have a higher qualification in order to gain credibility in political

circles, particularly among people older than me.”

His financial situation at that time was not good enough to pay for further education without a scholarship, and for a time, he worked as a clerk with the Custodian of Enemy Properties Office. He had always been keen to write, and had edited the school magazine. While at school, he had begun to write on political subjects, and submitted articles to some of the English-language newspapers. His articles from that time are now stored as part of the National Archives, whose Custodian, Datuk Zakiah Hanum says: “He wrote them under the pseudonym of C. H. E. Det, to conceal the fact that the views expressed were being written by a Malay, but what is apparent from the writing is the fact that the writer was very young.” Since then, his writing has matured, but the style still shows the determination to put over the writer’s firm point of view.

● Mahathir originally wanted to study law, but was unable to get a scholarship. With his perseverance, drive and ability to apply himself to concentrated study, he would undoubtedly have made an excellent lawyer in whichever field he chose. But it was not to be. When a scholarship opportunity became available, it was in medicine. He duly applied for the place at the King Edward VII College of Medicine in Singapore, and gained admission. Once he had secured his place, he was interviewed and asked about his financial status. He filled in a form with all the details, and was awarded a scholarship by the then Federal Government, who then gave him an allowance of \$25 – reduced to \$10 because he was receiving \$15 a month from home.

His schooldays were at an end. Now he was off to Medical College, to take one more stride towards a respected position in society from which he could make his political mark. His elder sisters, Rafeah and Habsah, said in retrospect, “We never expected to get a politician in the family. What we wanted was a doctor.” And for twenty years, a doctor was what the family got.

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Life at medical college in 1947 was not easy for a "Freshman". There was a lot of ragging of the new students by others in more senior terms, and being in a medical school meant there were some fairly grisly jokes played on the "freshies". Mahathir, for instance, once had his pockets filled with small bones, all human, which had been "borrowed" from the anatomy laboratory. Another senior, Chong Chung Hiang, once made him sleep all night underneath his bed. One of his later room mates was Carleel Marican, now a practicing doctor in Melaka, a large and heavy man. One of the freshman "punishments" in his year was for the offending students to have to carry Carleel and dump him in the bathtub – in retrospect, it was a fortunate thing he was not in Mahathir's freshman group, for the future Prime Minister was slightly-built, and would have found such a weight intolerable.

In one way, the ragging served a useful purpose. "Ragging in the first year forced the 'freshies' to get to know each other very quickly as we were the 'oppressed minority'," says Dr. Mahathir. "With the 1947 batch a deep feeling of camaraderie developed which has lasted all these years. The class of '47 holds reunions every two years. When I was sick recently, many sent telegrams and some came even from Australia."

The work schedule was intense, with many new

things to assimilate every day. Classes in biology were held at the Medical College, but physics and chemistry were taught at Raffles College, to which the students were taken by lorry. The tight schedule left no time for homesickness.

The students' leisure periods were few. The scholarship students all lived on campus, with food and lodgings provided free, so Mahathir's \$25 a month was only needed for personal necessities and the occasional visit to the local cinema. As he remembers, "Most of the Malayan students were on financial aid. When at the end of the month allowances were received, the students' lounge would become empty. Two days later, all the meagre allowances spent, the lounge would become full again. Senior students displayed their superiority by twiddling the knobs of the lounge radio-gram with their toes. Consequently the 'gram was out of order most of the time."

Mahathir was not keen on games, apart from table tennis which he played during lunch breaks. This lack of interest in games has continued throughout his life. But he was already proficient at rugby, which he had learned while at Sultan Abdul Hamid College. As the school had a reputation for producing fine rugby players, Mahathir was immediately asked to report for rugby training for the College team. Although he was never called upon to play, he was selected as Reserve both for the College side, and also for the Singapore All-Blues.

In addition to his regular college work, Mahathir persisted with his writing career, submitting regular articles to the *Sunday* (now *Straits*) *Times*, again under the pseudonym of C. H. E. Det, a name which effectively disguised the fact that it was a Malay who was writing. He was paid well for these articles, he remembers, which served him well when his leisure time increased and he was able to travel more.

Of the 70 students in Mahathir's year, there were only

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Who could tell, looking at the young girl on the left of this picture, that she would become a doctor, and the wife of the future Prime Minister of her country? This picture of Datin Seri Dr. Siti Hasmah was taken long before she went to Singapore to become a medical student. (*New Straits Times*)

seven Malays. Being in a minority, and in a strange town, they naturally tended to stay together, getting to know each other well in the process. Almost all of the Malay students in this notable year have since gone on to succeed in their chosen fields, mainly in public service, although by the end of the course there were only four of them left to graduate as doctors.

One of these four was the only woman on the course, a shy and pretty girl from Selangor called Siti Hasmah Ali. A well brought-up young lady, she was modest and self-effacing, and it must have been difficult for her to be placed in such a prominent position on her course. As the only girl among the Malay students, she did not lack for attention. Even the non-Malays expressed interest.

Mahathir, equally strictly-raised and by nature very quiet and unassuming, found it hard to approach his classmate in any social sense. The strongly conservative Malay upbringing saw to that, as did the fact that Mahathir had never had girl friends at school or at home. He says today: "I was not used to mingling with girls, until I went to Medical College, and there was this only Malay girl. It was a strange experience for me, but we soon became quite attached."

Mahathir faced competition for her favours from the other students, and found himself hovering just at the edge of the circle. Rather than feeling jealous when she went out with one of his class-mates, he remembers feeling simply envious that anyone could go out with girls so easily, whereas he never felt very comfortable in their company due to his lack of such experience. His future wife says now that she found him "a very shy and unobtrusive person, not good in socialising, especially with girls. He did not care to be active in sports or social recreation except when he played rugby for the College. He put studies first over other activities and excelled in it. Because of this he was very concerned about his fellow Malay students not doing well in their studies."

Mahathir's high academic ability was often called on

by his fellow students when they were in need of help with their work. Luckily for him, Siti Hasmah was finding certain subjects on the curriculum, such as physics and chemistry, a little difficult to cope with, and once again he found himself pressed into service as an extra tutor, this time to the young girl from Selangor. This situation broke the ice as far as social introductions were concerned, but in turn led to friction between 'tutor' and 'pupil' in the face of Mahathir's natural tendency to become irritated with anyone who could not grasp immediately what seemed obvious to his quick mind.

Although Mahathir and Siti Hasmah sometimes quarrelled, they always made up quickly, and by the end of the first year they were together as often as possible. At that time, he told her nothing about his political ambitions. It seemed enough to do, trying to become a doctor, without aspiring to political office. Dr. Siti Hasmah says: "It would not have put me off if he had told me then. I would have laughed and regarded it as one big joke!" Nevertheless, the will to succeed in politics was there, dormant, waiting for the right time and opportunity.

It soon became evident to them both that marriage was what they wanted most. There was nothing formal about the way Mahathir proposed. He says, simply: "We both assumed we would get married some day. The assumption came fairly early. There was no formal proposal - it was sort of understood."

His articles continued to earn him money. He was able to buy a motor cycle, and introduced his fiancée to the joys of pillion-riding. Later, he managed with the help of a brother-in-law to acquire a small car, a second-hand Triumph Mayflower, which he used during his last year at Medical College and which served him well into his appointment as a houseman. He remembers, laughingly, that the Chinese did not like the car, as it had a lot of sharp edges and "looked like a coffin."

Marriage became something to be eagerly looked forward to after they both graduated, and in the meantime, they each paid visits to their respective future parents-in-law. Siti Hasmah made the first visit, seeming to know just what she wanted, for she took the daring step (in those days) of following Mahathir up to Alor Setar in the holidays. It was very unusual for a girl to go to the house of a male friend, and amounted to a certain declaration that marriage was intended at some time soon. Dr. Mahathir's sisters remember that they immediately liked their brother's fiancée, but Siti Hasmah's family, who were influential in Selangor, were not so sure about the young medical student. It was not until Mahathir graduated that he was able to ask a relative to ask formally for Siti Hasmah's hand in marriage.

In spite of Mahathir's tutoring, Siti Hasmah was back-coursed in her first year, which prevented them from graduating on the same day, although they took care to be in each other's graduation photographs. Mahathir's academic progress, however, was swift. He found only one obstacle, a "viva voce" examination at which he advanced some theories that were too American in concept for the very British lady examiner. His presentation was correct, says Dr. Mahathir, but the examining board would not accept them as being within the approved curriculum. Six months later, however, he passed the same board with flying colours. He succeeded in the necessary three subjects, medicine, surgery and obstetrics/gynaecology, and was awarded his MBBS in 1953.

He left Singapore for Pulau Pinang, to enter his first job there as a houseman in the General Hospital. When that job ended, he was appointed as a Medical Officer in the General Hospital in Alor Setar. This gave him an opportunity after some years of living at his parents' home again, and while in his appointment at the hospital, he would always take time to have lunch with his

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mother in the little house he had known all his life.

Further jobs for the newly-qualified doctor took him to Perlis for two months as a relief doctor, and for another six months, before he got married, to the remote offshore island of Langkawi. Now a popular tourist resort, Pulau Langkawi was fairly isolated in those days, without modern facilities. Even in the hospital, all water had to be drawn from a well, and lighting was powered by a small generator. Mahathir has had a great fondness for the little island ever since, returning there as a break from the pressures of high office, and taking a personal interest in the development of the resort as a tourist attraction.

He was posted there because of his approaching marriage, as it was realised that he would have to go there as a bachelor – the District required only one Medical Officer, and after his marriage there would be two doctors in his family. Siti Hasmah had graduated as

Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and Dr. Siti Hasmah, in traditional Malay wedding dress, pose for the camera on their wedding day.
(New Straits Times)





This photograph of Dr. Mahathir and Dr. Siti Hasmah was taken in the early years of their marriage. (*New Straits Times*)

a doctor a year later than him, and had to spend a year as a houseman herself in the General Hospital in Kuala Lumpur before they could get married. While she was

working in Kuala Lumpur, Dr. Mahathir was only able to visit her twice, during public holidays.

Dr. Mahathir had always been interested in improving his living conditions. Magazines on interior decoration had always fascinated him, and according to his sisters, he spent much of his time when a schoolboy in decorating the house in different ways. It was therefore no surprise to his family that, in preparation for his wedding, he designed his own decorations for the "bersanding" ceremony, designed the headboard of the bed and the dressing table, and supervised all the carpentry. He even did much of it himself. The marriage took place on 5th August 1956: Mahathir was no longer alone.

After their marriage, Dr. Siti Hasmah moved up to Alor Setar to work in the Alor Setar General Hospital as a Medical Officer. For a time, the newly-weds lived in Mahathir's parents' house, but were then given Government Quarters near the hospital. Here, in this ground floor flat, they made their first home, and here they brought up their first child, Marina, born in June 1957.

It was also in 1957 that Mahathir made the crucial decision to leave Government service, and to set up his own clinic as a private practitioner in Alor Setar. He had been considering this for some time, and it was his own choice to make the break with his Government employers. As a Government doctor, he was barred from political activity, so there was no other course for him to take, given his aspirations to help his people to improve their economic chances.

His wife took his decision in her stride. Although, as she says, she thought she had married a doctor to work with the people, she knew him well enough to accept that she could not have influenced him to do otherwise even if she had tried.

To set up a private clinic required money that Dr. Mahathir did not have. Luckily, he was able to borrow enough from his brother-in-law, and the MAHA Clinic



The old MAHA Clinic is now a pharmacy, but Dr. Mahathir's cash register is still in use. In his days as a rural doctor, the Prime Minister never rang up as much money on this till as he should have done, as he frequently failed to charge at all in the case of needy patients. (*Robin Adshead*)

was duly launched. It was then one of only five private clinics in the town, and the first to be opened by a Malay. Today, the old shophouse in Alor Setar where the first MAHA Clinic was established is still there, although it has become a pharmacy. The owner still keeps a photo-



Dr. Mahathir's old nameplate is still kept in the former Clinic, as a lasting souvenir of Alor Setar's illustrious son. (*Robin Adshead*)

graph of his famous predecessor, and the doctor's name plate still hangs over the inner door. In the rear, bookshelves line the corridor, their shelves bending under the weight of dusty boxes of case histories of the doctor's earliest patients. Outside the courtyard at the back of the building, a faded sign still hangs on the wall of the courtyard where Dr. Mahathir parked his car. It rather gives the impression that the owner has only recently left, although it is more than thirty years since the MAHA Clinic opened its doors to local patients.

Dr. Mahathir displayed the same sense of dedication to his patients and his practice that he was later to bring to high office. His clinic would start at 9 a.m., and continued until the last patient was seen – often as late as 9 p.m. When the clinic first opened, he brought his lunch to the office; he was embarrassed by the thought of leaving while there were patients waiting for his attention. He would snatch a brief snack in the examination room, and then start work again. After the

clinic closed for the day, there would still be two or three house calls to be made, sometimes involving trips to distant villages. His first new car was a Morris Oxford, which he had bought with the help of a Government loan when he was a Medical Officer. This would take him to the edge of the rice fields; if he was lucky, there would be someone from the kampung to meet him, to take him to the patient's house. If there was no guide, he would shoulder his medical bag and make his way across the padi fields, often in pitch darkness.

The long hours of work and frequent calls on his family life never deterred him. He gained an enviable reputation as a doctor who was never known to refuse a callout, whatever time of day or night. As he went about his rounds, he saw every day how poor were the rice farmers, how low was the standard of living in the quiet kampungs, and it steeled his resolve to help his people as much as he could.

He smiles when he remembers his early days on his own. "The charge for examination and medicine was \$3.00 (Malaysian). No one grumbled about paying. Some, who could not pay immediately, were allowed to pay when they could. Those who could afford it would pay eventually. A modest income was made which was usually on-lent to clinic staff, interest-free. This resulted in a perpetual overdraft from the bank. In a sense, the clinic was rather badly managed." His original cash register is still in use in the pharmacy in his old establishment. One senses that it gets more use now than it did with its original owner, and that it was his generosity and compassion rather than his bad management that made the bell on the till ring less often than it might have done.

He made enough money, however, to pay back his brother-in-law, and even to buy another car, this time a large American Pontiac. His patients, who knew how hard he worked for them, never begrudged his success.

In spite of his heavy daily workload, he became active

within the local UMNO organisation, driven by his deep conviction that he could help the Malay community integrate fully into the commercial life of the country. He already had strong ideas about the way he would like to see economic development proceed, and wanted to be in a position from which he could influence the Government to improve its service to the people. He became known in his area as "Dr UMNO", a convenient title as it combined his two roles in a memorable way. He could be seen doing good for his community at two levels, and when the time came for advancement in politics, his patients, his friends and his community would not easily forget the tireless doctor who had cared so deeply for them all.

His family continued to grow, bringing great happiness to Dr. Mahathir and his wife. In November 1958 his first son, Mirzan, was born, and his second daughter, Melinda, adopted in 1960. In January 1961, Mokhzani arrived, born according to the now-established family custom in the General Hospital in Alor Setar. Dr. Siti Hasmah says that her husband was always very supportive during each of her deliveries, but when Mukhriz, the youngest son, was born in the "family" hospital in Alor Setar in November 1964, Dr. Mahathir was on his way to Kuala Lumpur by train to attend his first Parliamentary session.

The family was a very close-knit unit, and spent as much time as possible together. Dr. Mahathir emulated his father, who had died in 1960, in being very firm with his children, and a fair disciplinarian, who gave their education top priority. As their children grew up and left home to continue their education or begin their own careers, their presence in the family home was missed so much that in 1984 Dr. Mahathir and Dr. Siti Hasmah adopted two more children, their son Mazhar and daughter Maizura.

His wife has not really changed her opinions of him that she formed when they first met. She admits, how-

ever, that "he is not as shy now as before, since politics demand that he meets with all sorts of people. He still has his reservations when talking and meeting with total strangers. Caring for the well-being of the Malays is still his concern, especially now that he is in the position to do something about it. Work, discipline and trustworthiness are now his main principles."

As they are his principles today, so they were then. His political activity increased to the point where he needed help with the clinic. He acquired assistants, one of whom, Dr. Yaacob, later became a partner and now runs the present-day MAHA Clinic, situated close to the new Merlin Hotel in Alor Setar.

Once his work at the clinic decreased, if only marginally, he had more time to spend on politics, in which he had been involved since his schooldays. As has been shown, medicine had all along been his planned route to gaining credibility in politics among people older than himself. He found it natural that having become recognised as a person of some standing within his community, a doctor in a small town, he should make his move into politics. After all, he had a fall-back position, represented by the clinic, and if he should fail in politics, he could simply resume his medical practice. He therefore stood as the prospective Member of Parliament for Kota Setar Selatan in 1964.

On this occasion, his first-ever election to a position within the Government, he was confident of his success at the polls. He was able to watch the count quite calmly. When the results came in, it was evident that the voters remembered his ceaseless and untiring work on their behalf. They elected him with a large majority. The celebration was sober, and in typical Mahathir fashion, he spent a day touring villages in his new constituency in a decorated lorry, to thank his voters personally.

At last, the rural doctor from Kedah was in a position to air his people's grievances in the nation's forum. He was a Member of the Malaysian Parliament, elected

with a convincing majority. After so many years, he was now in the position for which he had planned and striven, from which he could begin to implement his ideas for reform and the betterment of his fellow Malays.

The Early Struggles

Dr. Mahathir's aims in becoming a Member of Parliament were initially to promote his views and ideas on how to improve Government Service and direct it more towards economic development. He wanted the Malays to integrate fully in the commercial life of the country. As an MP, his influence was limited to speaking in Parliament and in other public places, but this he did with vigour. Public reaction was mixed, but by being controversial, he became even more well known than he already was.

He considered that through being a member of the ruling party, closer to the people in authority, he would be able to bring development to his constituency, and to make the plight of the rice farmers, one of the poorest sectors of the community, better known.

As he found his niche as a backbencher, he was able to highlight the wrenching poverty of the rural areas, and to point out the backwardness of the Malays in comparison to other Malaysians. He had been used to making up his own mind as a doctor, and continued to formulate his own opinions in Parliament. He began to gather round him a circle of political friends with whom he could discuss political matters. It often helps to have an audience when sorting out one's thoughts, and more often than not, ideas came to him during these discussions. His circle of such friends is large, and there has never been any one particular person on whose political opinions he has relied.

In his spare time, Mahathir read widely, mainly political books and news articles, which helped him

formulate ideas and approaches. Reading and learning has been a lifelong habit for him, to the point where even he cannot be entirely sure where or when all his influences originated. Certainly his reading has been very varied, and he is always quick to note a potential lesson in what he reads. He knows that one can never stop learning; a book or magazine is never far from his hand, to be studied in his few spare moments. Even now, with all the pressures of State upon him, he makes time to study and to write every day.

He has always tended to take as his role-models the reforming leaders of the past who achieved progress and greatness for their people. Of course, the Prophet of Islam, Mohammed has a prominent place. Dr. Mahathir says of him:

“It was his teachings and examples that transformed the Arabs from a nomadic, feuding, backward race into a great people who in the space of one century not only spread their cultures and faith throughout the known world then, but who built a new civilisation that left its indelible effect on all future civilisations. The Renaissance would not have been as magnificent had it not drawn upon the wealth of knowledge accumulated in the Golden Age of Islamic civilisation.”

His other heroes include Peter the Great of Russia, and the Meiji Emperor of Japan (Mutsuhiko), both of whom brought progress and greatness to their isolated, relatively backward people and nations. For a while, even President Sukarno of Indonesia captured his imagination as a hero, for his welding of the hundreds of culturally diverse peoples of the Indonesian Archipelago into a single nation.

Other world leaders from whom he sought to learn include Mustafa Kemal, the founder of modern Turkey, a person Dr. Mahathir would like to emulate, even though he disagrees with Kemal's views on religion. Heroes closer to home were not hard to find either. For a time, Mahathir looked up to Dato Onn, the founder



This historic photograph was taken four years before Independence, and shows Dato Onn bin Ja'afar, the chairman of the Independence of Malaya Party, at the Malayan National Conference in Kuala Lumpur in 1953. (*New Straits Times*)

president of UMNO. At local level, he found heroes in two of the regents of Kedah in the early part of this century together with one of the longest-serving State

Secretaries, Haji Shariff, because they stood up to the British Administration during the colonial period and prevented the erosion of the state's autonomy.

Although his responsibilities had increased as a Member of Parliament, he was not so self-conscious about taking his seat as he had been when meeting his first patient after qualifying as a doctor. He felt he was able to cope with anything that came his way, and that once he became used to all the new procedures, it would not be too difficult. His responsibilities as an MP seemed detached compared to those faced by a medical officer, and his own inner strength gave him the courage to confront his new task.

When faced with political problems, he remembered his medical training, the experience he had gained in dealing with people of all communities and the lessons he had learnt. Of these he says: "The first lesson is the methodical way that doctors approach medical problems. Observance, history taking, physical examinations, special examinations, narrowing the diagnosis and then deciding on the most likely diagnosis and the treatment required. These are useful in any problem in life, and they serve me well in attending top political problems.

"The sense of compassion and the deep understanding that a doctor develops towards patients are also useful in politics. An ability to look at the other side of the picture, the patients' or the opponents' side enables understanding and appreciation. Countermeasures can then be developed.

"If the ailments of a society or nation are attended to in the same way as the illness of a patient, some good results must follow. The essential thing is to develop diagnostic skills."

His deeply-felt but controversial views were given plenty of airing during the debates in 1964-65 at which time the People's Action Party (PAP) of Singapore - then still part of Malaysia - was led by Lee Kuan Yew in the

Malaysian Parliament. Dr. Mahathir often criticised the PAP for its "Malaysia for the Malaysians" policies. "The PAP professed to support the Alliance Government of Malaysia," says Dr. Mahathir, "but aimed at displacing the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) as partner in the Government. The MCA saw this support of the Government as an attempt to drive a wedge between UMNO Malays and the MCA. The UMNO Malays on the other hand disliked the PAP because UMNO's counterpart Malay party in Singapore was opposed to the PAP. Besides, the PAP was regarded in Singapore as being anti-Malay.

"The PAP's 'Malaysian Malaysia' push was regarded as a threat to the Malays who felt that equal treatment by the Government of all races would result in unequal development with the Malays losing their position and stake in the country. The frequent condemnation of the PAP and 'Malaysian Malaysia' eventually led to the separation of Singapore from Malaysia. I welcomed the decision as I felt Singapore was too big a mouthful for Malaysia. Singaporean Chinese were too aggressive, and lack the understanding and sensitiveness of most Malaysian Chinese."

Much of Mahathir's Parliamentary time was taken up with defending Government policies against the Opposition, which at that time was dominated by the Pan Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP). Such defence meant proving that the PMIP's concept of an Islamic State was not in accordance with the teaching of Islam. Dr. Mahathir never found this difficult to prove, and his arguments ensured that the PMIP never made much progress with their narrow interpretation of Islam, but in defending his Government's cause, he provoked from other members of the Opposition the accusation that the Government was too Malay and therefore Islamic.

His reputation for not mincing his words earned him many supporters, but also some enemies. None of this seemed to harm his career prospects in any way. It had

rather the opposite effect, marking him as an up-and-coming politician with definite, if outspoken, views.

Mahathir's inclusion in overseas delegations began to broaden his perspective from purely local issues to international affairs. His first journey abroad on behalf of his country was in 1964, when he represented Malaysia at the World Assembly of Youth conference in Amherst, Massachusetts. Signs of further advancement came later that same year, when he was elected Chairman of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organisation's (AAPSO) Committee for Malaysia. In this capacity, he attended the AAPSO conference in Ghana, and was told off for going to it. The Government considered AAPSO a Communist front, anathema to the pro-Western Malaysia of that time. The fact that he attended the conference to defend Malaysia against Indonesian claims that Malaysia was "neo-colonialist" was dismissed as irrelevant, he says in retrospect.

In 1965, Mahathir was included in Malaysia's Delegation to the United Nations, where he spoke in the Committee on De-Colonisation. His views on the origins of the Arab rulers were apparently misunderstood as an attack on Malay royalty and were later toned down by the Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, who said that Dr. Mahathir had "spoken in the heat of the moment." Dr. Mahathir, reflecting on what he said, says quite resolutely that he made his points in an atmosphere of complete calm, within the Committee, and that he meant every word. As a junior member of the Delegation however, he accepted the rebuke in good heart.

Back in Malaysia, his plain speaking about the need for Malays to advance in economic and commercial life, for poverty to be eradicated and for all races to be integrated on an equal basis had made him a prominent member of UMNO and won him much support in the party. He was no longer merely a regional representative, but a national leader – a prominence



Dr. Mahathir is seen here in 1971 shaking hands with Tun Abdul Razak, Malaysia's second Prime Minister, at a meeting at Morib, about 45 kilometres from Kuala Lumpur. In the centre is Encik Mokhtar bin Abdul Rahim, an UMNO Youth Executive Committee member.

recognised by others, including foreign observers of the Malaysian political scene, many of whom predicted that Mahathir would soon play a leading rôle in the affairs of his country. They were right.

The Early Struggles

In 1965, Mahathir was elected to UMNO's Supreme Council, a sure sign of his standing in his party. (He has been a member of the Council ever since, except during the three years from 1969-71, when he was in the political wilderness, and in 1969 gained the highest vote).

His mother, who had been in poor health for some time, passed away in 1966. Dr. Mahathir, who had been very close to both his parents, was very saddened by his mother's passing.

Soon, however, he was travelling again. His first trip overseas, and his first real holiday, had been with his wife in 1960 when they had spent one week in Hong Kong. Since then, Dr. Mahathir and his wife have taken every opportunity to travel, and to be together on their overseas trips as often as possible. In 1967, he returned to the United States where he participated in an international affairs seminar at Harvard under the tutelage of Dr. Henry Kissinger. Another lecturer on the course was the distinguished American tutor John Cabot Lodge, who took the future Prime Minister in politics. Dr. Mahathir found that he responded better to Mr. Lodge than to the drier outlook of Dr. Kissinger.

Education had always been a subject close to his heart, and in Parliament he had pushed for better higher education facilities throughout the country and for more opportunities and scholarships for the Malays. As a result of his knowledge of the field, he was appointed in 1968 to be the first Chairman of the Higher Education Council, to advise the Government on the subject. His thinking influenced the development of various universities and institutions after 1969, but his appointment to the Council was rather short-lived. Before he could complete his work, there was an election in 1969, in which Dr. Mahathir lost his seat.

He considers this loss to have been his first real political failure. The election was only the second that he had contested, and he had caused some difficulties for

himself by his outspoken views on the advancement of Malays. For his opinions, he was labelled "a Malay Ultra" by the Chinese, who voted heavily against him. Once given such a label, he says, it was hard to live down, even when he had already done much for the Chinese in his constituency, including donating some scholarships in local schools. The tag of "Ultra" made even the most innocent statement he made seem extreme, and hampered his attempts to explain his stand in a rational manner.

The immediate result of the May 1969 elections was the inter-communal riots in Kuala Lumpur, in which hundreds of people lost their lives. The Government party, the Alliance, did badly in the election, and the victorious Chinese Democratic Action Party (DAP) taunted the Malays. Dr. Mahathir blamed the election results and the subsequent riots on the insensitivity and lack of leadership of the UMNO president and Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, and was promptly expelled from the party. It seemed that his political career, once so promising, was at an end. The family returned to Kedah, the doctor returned to his clinic and his patients.

Although downcast at his rejection by the party for which he had always striven so hard, Dr. Mahathir's character would not let him be depressed for too long. He accepted failure as he accepted success – as part of the normal ebb and flow of life. His training as a doctor had taught him not to become either too excited or too depressed about anything. He believed in himself and his political thinking, and was prepared to bide his time until a new opportunity presented itself. His philosophy had taught him that such an opportunity would not be long in coming; meanwhile, he did all he could to prepare for his return to politics.

He picked up the strands of his life again quickly, and the family built a new house in Titi Gajah. Being out of political favour meant that Dr. Mahathir could concen-

trate on his work in the clinic, his studies and his writing. It was during this period of 'exile' that he wrote and published *The Malay Dilemma*, in which he propounded his views on the reasons for the Malays' lack of success in business and other spheres, and his proposed solutions to this problem.

The book attracted immediate attention, especially from his former UMNO colleagues in the Government. In it, Dr. Mahathir took the Alliance Government severely to task for failing to protect the Malays from the economic domination of the Chinese, and championed the preservation of Malay special privileges. Because the author had raised the subject of race in his championship of the Malay cause, the Prime Minister decreed the book highly controversial, and ordered it banned. It was not until Dr. Mahathir himself became Prime Minister that the book was removed from the proscribed list. Today, many of the theories he propounded have been shown to be correct, and ideas from the book became part of the New Economic Policy devised in 1970, when Mahathir was himself still outside the party.

His stint in exile allowed him to be together with his growing family, and to be a father to his children in a very real sense, just as his father had been to him. Even when Dr. Mahathir went electioneering, or making public speeches, he would return home in the evening, so his children grew up knowing him well. Both he and his wife would have dearly liked all the children to have completed their secondary education in Malaysia, but their eldest son Mirzan went to school in England at the age of fourteen, and all the others have gone overseas for further education at their own insistence.

All the while, Dr. Mahathir was refining his ideas on multi-racial politics, in preparation for the time when he could make a political comeback. He had long since realised that one of the watershed events in Malaysian political history had occurred in 1951, during elections

for the Municipality of Kuala Lumpur, when the local UMNO division decided on an election pact with the local Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) branch.

Of this event, Dr. Mahathir has written at some length.

"This was unprecedented," he says. "Hitherto, UMNO and the Malays generally regarded the MCA as their political opponents out to advance Chinese interest at the expense of the Malays. The MCA on the other hand regarded the UMNO as plainly anti-Chinese.

Surprisingly, in the 1951 Municipal elections the two parties worked closely together and won practically all the seats against the so-called multi-racial or non-racial parties.

The success led to the formation of a formal UMNO/MCA Alliance on a national scale. Subsequently the party representing the Indians, the Malayan Indian Congress, decided to join the Alliance. Thus was born the concept of racially-based coalition parties which have since dominated Malaysian politics.

Apparently all the races in Malaysia approved of this concept. They felt that they would not lose their identity or their influence, yet they could adjust to each others' needs and interests.

Multi-racial or non-racial parties have not won the approval of Malaysians. They feel unsure that such parties can safeguard the interest of all the races fairly. In actual fact multi-racial parties in Malaysia have tended to be dominated by one race or another. Depending on which race dominates the party, the policy of that party tends to promote that particular race. This prevents the party from being truly non-racial. Support for such parties is never sufficient to give them a majority.

On the other hand the out-and-out racialist parties are also incapable of winning sufficient seats. The dispersal of the different races in Malaysia is such that parties cannot appeal only to one race if they expect to win.

Hence the almost accidental formation of the Alliance of racially based parties in 1951 was a significant watershed in Malaysian politics. Since then the elected Governments have always been coalitions of racially based parties.

The Early Struggles

The Alliance was enlarged to include basically racially-based parties from Sabah and Sarawak when the Federation of Malaya became Malaysia. After the race riots of 1969 the Alliance was once again enlarged to include some opposition parties and was renamed the Barisan Nasional (National Front)."

Holding such views, and having the time to study his own projections for policies, he was determined that everyone should have their share of economic improvements. He spoke at numerous meetings during this time, to explain his views, and had always felt, even when he was expelled from UMNO, that he was popular

This family group photograph was taken in 1972, and shows Dr. Mahathir and his family in front of their home in Alor Setar. The house is called "Pondok Maharizan", "Pondok" meaning "Cottage" or "Hut", and "Maharizan" being a composite word incorporating elements of the names of all the family members. From the left, the picture shows Dr. Mahathir, his daughter Melinda, 12, son Mukhriz, 7, Dr. Siti Hasmah, sons Mirzan, 13, and Mokhzani, 11.





Dr. Mahathir, as Chairman of the Universiti Kebangsaan's Council, is escorted into the Dewan Al-Malik Faisal to address the students. On the right is UKM Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mohamad Ghazali. (*New Straits Times*)

among the party rank and file, and that his views had wide support with them, if not with its leaders.

This feeling was totally justified when, in 1972, he was accepted back into UMNO. In 1970, the Prime Minister had stepped down, and his Deputy, Tun Abdul Razak, had taken over. The new Prime Minister was much better disposed towards Dr. Mahathir, who was no sooner accepted back into UMNO than he was elected to the Supreme Council of the Party. He was also re-appointed to the Higher Education Advisory Council that year. By 1973 he was nominated as a member of the Dewan Negara, the Senate. His interest in education being well known, in April 1974 he was appointed a Member of the University Court, and the University of Malaya Council. Later he became Chairman of the Universiti Kebangsaan Council.

His rise in education circles did not stop there. Returned unopposed as the Member for Kubang Pasu in the 1974 elections, he was appointed Minister for Education on 6th September that year. This was a considerable achievement, as he was the only MP to be appointed a full Minister without having first held the post of Deputy Minister. Education was his first cabinet post, and is an appointment often held by the 'rising stars' of Government. His criticism of the first Prime Minister and his subsequent expulsion from the Party appeared to have worked in his favour. Even he admits that it is possible that had he not gained notoriety due to his criticism of Tunku Abdul Rahman, he would not be Prime Minister today. Yet it had been a risky stance, as he acknowledges, all previous critics of the Tunku having disappeared from the political scene permanently.

Ministerial appointment had two direct effects on Dr. Mahathir and on his family. The first was the need to move his home from Alor Setar down to Kuala Lumpur. Dr. Siti Hasmah had known after her husband was elected to parliament in 1964 that he would not want just to be a good MP, but after the events of 1969, she had not realised how soon the call to higher rank would



This informal photograph of the Mahathir family on a boating trip was taken in 1972, when Dr. Mahathir was still outside UMNO. The boat was one of six built by Dr. Mahathir, a skilled woodworker and carpenter in his spare time. (NST).

come. The family had had five happy years in their new house, and the children had been able to have a stable life at home and at school, away from the limelight that their father's new appointment would naturally attract.

On the other hand, she was happy for her husband, as he would be doing what he loved to do for the people – to improve their education, and she knew he would excel in it.

The second effect was caused by the Government ruling forbidding Ministers to practice medicine. After 20 years' involvement in both politics and medicine, the doctor had reached the end of his medical career. Of this turning point in his life, Dr. Mahathir says:

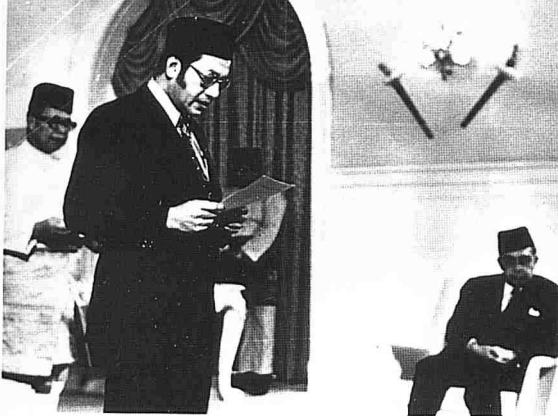
“The practice of medicine came easily for me. I discovered I was naturally sympathetic to people and their problems. It was very satisfying to be able to help cure a sick person. Perhaps their gratitude for helping them was even more gratifying.

By the time I was required to give up the practice, (i.e. on my appointment as Minister of Education in 1974), I had had 20 years of medicine. However, even as a practising doctor I was already deeply involved in politics. My love was thus divided between medicine and politics. Perhaps the love for politics was greater as I was a politician earlier than becoming a doctor. It was therefore not too difficult to give up medicine for my other and more abiding love, politics. As I said, the study of medicine was at least partly in order to further my career as a politician.

I have no doubt that if I had failed as a politician I would have gone on with my medical practice. Indeed, when in 1969 I lost the elections, my practice did not suffer in any way. I was happy to attend to my patients and there was no complaint about my work.”

He adds: “There is a degree of restlessness (in me) which would make total commitment to medicine quite unsatisfying. I would want to do something else in the way of public service in order to satisfy the need to be more involved in community life than just attending to the illness of members of the community.”

In many ways it was just as well that he was forced by Government rules to give up his medical career, for further advancement was close at hand. Tun Abdul Razak, who had known and liked Dr. Mahathir and who had



Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad takes the oath before His Majesty, the Yang DiPertuan Agong at the Istana Negara at a swearing-in ceremony for the new Ministers and Deputy Ministers in 1974. Seen seated at the right is Tun Abdul Razak, the Prime Minister at the time. (*New Straits Times*)

been responsible for the resumption of his political career, had passed away while in office. He was succeeded by Tun Hussein Onn, who did not nominate a Deputy Prime Minister within the first few days of his premiership. Speculation was rife regarding the identity of the appointee, who had to be one of the three UMNO Vice-Presidents. Dr. Mahathir, one of the three potential candidates for the post, was actually the most junior, both in terms of length of service and in votes won. His subsequent appointment as Deputy Prime Minister by Tun Hussein Onn, on 5th March 1976, only eighteen months after he joined the Cabinet, he now regards as an enigma. He remembers that the Prime



Datin Seri Dr. Siti Hasmah is seen here (centre) in this 1976 picture encouraging her son Mukhriz (left) at a stall at the "Food and Fun Fair" event at the Sentul Convent Primary School 11. She was the patron of the Fair, organised by the school's Parents-Teachers Association, when her husband was still Deputy Prime Minister. (*New Straits Times*)

Minister did not really know him at all well, but thinks that Tun Abdul Razak must have spoken highly of him to Tun Hussein Onn. He adds: "I was pleasantly surprised and encouraged by the absence of nepotism, and the apparent objectivity in the selection." Within UMNO, he became Deputy President without any further contest.

Less than two years later, in January 1978, he was appointed Minister of Trade and Industry in Tun Hussein Onn's Cabinet. His work here brought him once again into the field of overseas commerce, and he was able to increase his knowledge of international economic diplomacy. He was also able to better his knowledge of business issues, impressing the



In 1976, Dr. Mahathir, as Deputy Prime Minister, paid a visit to the Kuala Lumpur General Hospital to see Police Field Force men wounded in action against Communist terrorists in a brief resurgence of the guerilla activity of the Emergency years. (*New Straits Times*)

industrialists and bankers he had to meet at home and abroad with his grasp of their affairs.

In January 1981, he represented the Prime Minister at the Heads of the Islamic Nations Conference in Taif. This was Mahathir's last appearance in the arena of nations before the onset of ill-health forced Tun Hussein Onn to retire. In the tradition of UMNO, Tun Hussein Onn was at once succeeded by his Deputy.

Dr. Mahathir became the Prime Minister of Malaysia on 16th July 1981.



Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad is seen here in 1976 touring the Sharp-Roxy Corporation (M) Bhd factory at Bakar Arang near Sungai Patani. As Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, he had officially opened the factory, a joint Malaysian - Japanese venture. (*New Straits Times*)

The Deputy Premier visited the Sultan Idris Teachers Training College in Tanjong Malim, Perak, on Convocation Day in August 1976, and was introduced to teachers by the Principal, Tuan Haji Ismail. Dr. Mahathir has always taken an intense interest in Education, especially as a means to advance the poorer sections of Malaysian society. (*New Straits Times*)





This 1977 photograph caught Dr. Mahathir, then Deputy Prime Minister, deep in conversation with Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia's first Prime Minister. (*New Straits Times*)

Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and Datin Seri Dr. Siti Hasmah were given a special parade on the occasion of Dr. Mahathir's first official visit as Prime Minister to his home state. The ride on "Chom", an elephant specially decorated for the occasion, was an honour normally only accorded to royalty, and took place at the Darul Aman Stadium in view of an enthusiastic audience of 20,000 people. (*New Straits Times*)



Leader of his Country

"There is an old Malay saying: "Lama-lama menjadi bukit"
- "it takes a long time to build a mountain."

This sentiment could never be taken as being Dr. Mahathir's motto. He wants his mountain built fast. But the top of the mountain is a lonely place - there is room only for one.

"The buck stops here". From this desk in an imposing office, surrounded by the trappings of power, the Prime Minister makes his plans and issues his instructions for the orderly running of Malaysia, Inc. (*Robin Adshead*)





This was the scene, colourful and traditional, when Dr. Mahathir took the oath at the swearing-in ceremony, as the incoming Prime Minister. (*New Straits Times*)

To be a Prime Minister is an arduous and lonely task. To be the Prime Minister of a country as potentially volatile as Malaysia is a daunting prospect, and certain political realities have to be accepted. All decisions must inevitably be compromises between differing interests; options are limited by financial constraints; and democracy must be tailored to fit the Malaysian scene.

After his first burst of elation at reaching the pinnacle of political success, Dr. Mahathir examined the burden of responsibilities with his inimitable pragmatism. The tasks he faced were formidable, but he was excited at the possibility of doing all those things he had always wanted – to put his own ideas to work, and to achieve the goals for the people and for the nation.

Leader of his Country

For this aim, he was prepared to work hard. He believed then, as he does now, that it is better to do something than to do nothing. He describes his philosophy thus: "A decision may be wrong, but it is better than no decision. If something goes wrong it is still possible to correct it halfway, but if nothing is done then there is no way of knowing whether a particular move is wrong or not."

Dr. Mahathir believes firmly in "Leadership by example," and has made this a slogan of his Administration. His immediate thought, on taking office as Prime Minister, was to find ways to improve the efficiency of the Government machine. He felt that he had a great opportunity to do the things that should have been done by others. Now that he was in charge, he had no excuse not to carry out his cherished policies.

After the swearing-in ceremony, the new Prime Minister handed over the oath of office to Chief Justice Tan Sri Raja Azlan Shah (centre) who witnessed the ceremony. At the left is Tan Sri Hashim Aman, Chief Secretary to the Government.
(New Straits Times)



There was nobody else to blame – he was in the most responsible position possible. There was no 'passing the buck'. When he was young, he had thought that it would be easy to convince people that they needed to change their ways and attitudes. All that was needed was to explain why they had to change. He also thought that a position of influence was all he needed.

His personal conviction of the need to alter the thinking patterns of the nation is solid. Today, a veteran of eight years in office, he can examine his beliefs and describe them as follows:

"I believe strongly that the success or otherwise of an individual or a race or a nation is dependent on the system of values practiced. In multi-racial Malaysia the indigenous people have not fared so well as the non-indigenous people in business and the professions. This has resulted in unequal development between the indigenous people and the non-indigenous people. The reason is that the two practise quite different value systems.

"Accordingly I have, through my writings, talks and speeches, tried to change the value system of the indigenous people, particularly the Malays, so that they can be more successful and more competitive. The campaign on clean living, skill acquisition, honesty, discipline etcetera, is a part of the attempt to change the value system of the Malaysian community in order to progress and achieve success. I would like to see the indigenous people, especially, being weaned from dependence on Government in their search for equality with the Chinese and Indian communities.

"If all the other policies and programmes I have initiated failed but there is a progressive change in the value system of the Malays and other Malaysians so that they become more competitive and self-reliant, then I would consider myself as having made a real contribution to the nation."

His first real political battle occurred almost as soon as he had been named as successor to Tun Hussein Onn.



After the swearing-in ceremony in 1981, both the outgoing Prime Minister, Tun Hussein Onn (right) and the incoming Premier, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, appear relieved and in a jovial mood, while the photographers record the historic event. (*New Straits Times*)

As his nomination had been close in time to the UMNO General Assembly in July 1981, Dr. Mahathir decided not to announce his own choice of Deputy, but to let the UMNO Assembly choose for itself. (The posts of Deputy Prime Minister and deputy president of UMNO are always held by the same man). This in itself was a novelty, since the normal procedure had always been for the Prime Minister to nominate his Deputy, and then



This photograph of the Prime Minister with his Deputy, Datuk Musa Hitam, was taken in August 1981, shortly after Dr. Mahathir took over, and the intense but friendly attitude of the high-ranking pair indicates that plans for Malaysia's rapid advancement were being discussed. (*New Straits Times*)

allow the General Assembly to elect the nominee to the Deputy Presidency. The two candidates were the Finance Minister, Tunku Razaleigh Hamzah, a member of the Kelantan ruling family, and the Education Minister, Datuk Musa Hitam. Tunku Razaleigh made the mistake of laying down conditions, saying that he would leave the Cabinet if he was not elected Deputy Prime Minister. Faced with this ultimatum, the UMNO delegates voted in Datuk Musa Hitam. It is, after all, almost a tradition in UMNO politics that the Education Minister is the heir apparent to the Deputy Prime

Minister and Deputy President. However, in spite of Tunku Razaleigh's declaration that he would quit if not elected, Dr. Mahathir's moderation and willingness to defuse the situation persuaded the losing candidate to remain in office as Finance Minister.

In many ways, the new Prime Minister changed the previous traditions of his high office. Neither he nor his Deputy, Datuk Musa Hitam, were from the aristocratic Malay élite, nor had either of them practiced during their careers the deference to authority that previous Malay political style had dictated. The new Administration of the "2Ms", as it was immediately labelled by the Press, was more representative of the well-educated, progressive young Malay leadership that was in no way afraid to initiate great and lasting changes within the country.

Mahathir's Government began to implement the changes almost immediately. The Government began to liaise with the private sector under the concept known as "Malaysia Incorporated," which meant that Malaysia should be viewed as a company where the government and the private sector are both owners and workers together. In a company, all the owners and workers are expected to cooperate to ensure the company's success, and only through the success of the company will the owners' and workers' well-being be safeguarded and improved. Under this concept, the privatisation of several major Government agencies was initiated, a number of loss-making state development corporations were closed down, and all government corporations were made to pay greater attention to higher performance and greater productivity.

Under Tun Hussein Onn's direction in January 1981, a scheme was initiated by which government-owned shares were transferred to a National Unit trust under the control of the National Equity Corporation, called in Bahasa "Pemodalanan Nasional Bhd," or PNB. The Trust allowed bumiputeras to invest in the shares directly,



While Deputy Premier in 1980, Dr. Mahathir visited a Malaysian military exercise in the Gong Kedak training area. At a Press conference later, he announced that Malaysia should continue to improve her defence capabilities regardless of the situation in Indo-China or elsewhere. He believes today that there is currently no defence situation that Malaysia cannot handle, but wishes to ensure that such a state of preparedness continues, in case of sudden changes in the regional scenario. (*New Straits Times*)

with individual investments being allowed up to 50,000 trust units. The purchase price was fixed at M\$1 per unit until 1990. The millions of dollars in the PNB were then used by the Government to purchase a controlling interest in other foreign-owned companies, as a purely commercial venture.

One of the companies the PNB invested in was the Guthrie Corporation, a large plantation-owning concern



This historic photograph from 1977 shows the presentation to Dr. Mahathir by the Sultan of Kedah of the "Seri Setia Diraja Kedak" award, that confers on the recipient the title "Datuk Seri". (*New Straits Times*)

based in Britain. A controlling interest was bought on the open market, and the take-over was successful, despite efforts in London to prevent it. Failure of these efforts led London to label the takeover as "backdoor nationalisation," a tag bitterly resented by the Malaysian Government.

This was just one of a number of contributing factors to the feeling among senior Malaysian politicians of rising discontent with Britain. The British at one time speculated with tin futures, so the Malaysian Government went into the market and bought those futures, at a reduced price. When delivery time came, however, the British could not deliver, as the Malaysians had all the tin. So the British changed the rules, and removed the necessity to deliver what had been agreed. The consequence was that Malaysia lost a lot of money, just as she had done when Britain devalued sterling without having the courtesy to inform Malaysia, whose reserves were in sterling.

Even such minor matters as Concorde overflying Malaysian air space without asking permission were seen by Malaysians as unwarranted discourtesy, a symbol of Britain taking the Malaysians for granted. A protest was sent, saying that the sonic resonance of Concorde was having detrimental effects on the breeding of fish in the Straits of Malacca, and consequently the Concorde service was re-routed.

The last straw was the raising by the British Government of the fees for overseas students, which imposed unbearable hardships on the majority of the 50,000 students then in Britain. These Malaysian students, who stayed in Britain for at least one year, represented a sizeable contribution to British "invisible earnings," and were considered to be the financial equivalent of at least 5,000,000 tourists each staying three days. In the face of what was seen as British intransigence and hostility to Malaysian interests, and in an effort to persuade the British Government not to take Malaysian

compliance for granted, Dr. Mahathir decided to implement a policy of "Buy British Last". He was promptly criticised in the British Press for being rabidly anti-British, when all he had done in reality was to protest on behalf of Malaysia against unilateral imposition of unfair standards.

With his customary foresight, however, Dr. Mahathir had already decided that Malaysia should begin to emulate successful countries in her own region. Prior to the removal of Britain as an example to be followed, a

Soon after becoming Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir paid a two-day official visit to Indonesia. He is seen here being greeted at the airport by President Suharto. The visit highlighted the closer links being forged between the two neighbouring Islamic countries. (*New Straits Times*)



new policy had been brought in. Under the title of "Look East," the people of Malaysia were encouraged to change their traditional views of Western countries as being role-models, and to look instead to the methods of Japan and South Korea as being part of the Asian blueprint for economic success. Matters for re-examination included diligence and discipline in work, loyalty to the nation and to the enterprise or business where the worker is employed, priority of group over individual interests, emphasis on productivity and high quality, upgrading efficiency, narrowing differentials and gaps between executives and workers, and management systems which concentrate on long-term achievement rather than short-term increases in dividends or staff incomes.

What the "Look East" policy did not mean was either buying all goods from Eastern countries, or granting all contracts to Eastern companies. Nor was it meant to imply that Malaysia should depend upon other Eastern countries for her prosperity. It meant solely the emulation, in the overall effort to develop Malaysia, of some of the rapidly developing Eastern countries who had become more dynamic than the traditional Western examples. As a personal contribution to this policy, the Prime Minister's son, Mukhriz, was employed for four years by the Bank of Tokyo. While in Tokyo, he attended the Japanese Language School there, and later graduated from Sophia University, majoring in Business and Administration.

This shift in attitude towards the East was accompanied by a greater emphasis in Islamic values within the Administration itself. A fresh drive against corruption was launched, and the first steps were taken to weed out officials who were either known to be corrupt or were suspected of corruption. A number of these resigned immediately, on hearing that the new Prime Minister was planning to winkle them out of office.

Management of the nation was rendered more



Dr. Mahathir's love of children is well-known. This was his warm-hearted reaction to a young visitor at the traditional "Open House" he gave to mark his becoming Prime Minister. The throng of well-wishers who came to celebrate his appointment seemed almost endless. (*New Straits Times*)

efficient so as to achieve political stability with rapid development. Work manuals and desk files were introduced to standardise procedures in all Government offices. Civil servants were encouraged to be more punctual and efficient. Name tags were to be worn by all civil servants to make them more personally accountable to the general public. Time-clocks were installed at every Government office to ensure that the stated working hours were adhered to. First to wear the name tags and punch the clocks were the Ministers of the new regime, led as always by the Prime Minister. Leadership by example was not to be just an empty phrase.

All Government policies were re-examined and new priorities determined. Detainees, except for hard-core Communists, were released. A more liberal policy was followed with regard to issuance of licences for publications. Among the books freed by the new ordinance was Dr. Mahathir's own book *The Malay Dilemma*, which had been circulating freely in spite of the ban. Releasing it offended few people, and it was not self-interest on the part of the Prime Minister that made him lift the ban, as most of his earnings from this book, as well as the two others he has subsequently published, are donated to charity. He simply considered that his views were still correct and should continue to be aired. In this view he has been very largely justified.

Dr. Mahathir's blunt and forthright views, as laid out in his writings, were seen abroad as being critical both of East and West, and friend and foe alike. In turn, Malaysia was seen as becoming truly independent and non-aligned. Participation in the Non-Aligned Movement was more positive, and in the forum of the United Nations, Malaysia played a more prominent role in voicing the problems of the developing world. All this was because of the new drive and impetus given to Malaysian politics and policies by the new 'helmsman'.

Although he was in a hurry to change inbuilt attitudes in Malaysia, the Prime Minister was never so

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naive as to think that these could be altered overnight. Campaigns were instituted that aimed to correct current lines of thought in a wide variety of areas. One such campaign has already produced results – workers trained in factories in Japan have learned to practice the work ethics which are considered the reason for the success of the Japanese economy.

Another campaign was begun to combat the rapid spread of Islamic fundamentalism, especially in the

Given his personal interest in education, it has not been surprising that the Prime Minister takes pleasure in seeing for himself the progress being made in schools all over Malaysia, and visits as many as possible. This scene, in a religious (Islamiah) school in Tawau was photographed during one of Dr. Mahathir's official visits to Sabah. (*New Straits Times*)



Mahathir of Malaysia

northern and eastern States. Such misinterpretations of Islamic teachings spread by people with a vested interest were countered by the Government, which believed that the incorrect interpretation of Islam was hampering the progress and development of Muslims everywhere, including those in Malaysia. To bolster Islamic interests, an Islamic University and an Islamic investment bank was founded, but there was always a

In 1980, while still Deputy Premier, Dr. Mahathir visited Sri Linggar Estate in Kampung Sungai Baru, Melaka, and tried his hand at harvesting palm oil. The Prime Minister has made palm oil production a top priority to contribute to Malaysia's prosperity, and the country is now the world's leading producer of this commodity. (*New Straits Times*)



correct balance between the State religion and the religions of the other races. There was no desire on the part of the Government, or indeed of the Muslim community, to impose Muslim law on every Malaysian, although Muslims accept such laws and subject themselves to them.

The New Economic Policy (NEP), instituted as a result of major Government restructuring after the 1969 racial riots, had as one of its aims the advancement of the Malay community in all spheres ranging from educational opportunity to commercial success. Dr. Mahathir says now that without the NEP, it would have taken forever for the Malays to have caught up with the other communities in business opportunities, commercial advantages or straight economic parity because the others were not just standing still while the Malays caught up.

Nevertheless, the Chinese and Indian communities regarded such preference as a barrier to their own prospects, and resented the allocation to Malay applicants of the lion's share of places in schools, universities and Government service. Dr. Mahathir defends this policy by saying:

"In any community, whether homogenous or not, inequality has to be corrected. Thus the idea of socialism is to achieve parity between the rich and the poor by nationalising the sources of wealth of the rich. Naturally the rich are not happy with the deprivation and restriction this involves. The communists went even further in an attempt to equalise everyone. Even in the most conservative society, disparity is not completely tolerated. Thus the rich are taxed at an ascending rate in order to help the poor, or, at the very least, to redistribute wealth.

But supposing the rich are not only rich but belong to a different and unassimilable race in a society, and the poor are made up of another race in that same society, then to the economic disparity will be added racial antagonism. This is an explosive mixture. No responsible Government can allow this kind of mixture to remain uncorrected.

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If it is possible, there should be assimilation. But in Malaysia, religious incompatibility prevents this. It is therefore imperative that at least the economic imbalance be corrected. This can be by outright expropriation of the wealth of the wealthy. It can also be by helping out the deprived. On the whole, the latter is the better choice. But it is not a perfect solution – there is no perfect solution.

On the whole, the second solution that Malaysia adopted has not caused too much unhappiness. Future generations will forget their perceived deprivations if they achieve equality.”

Dr. Mahathir already knew that poverty could not be wiped out simply by giving money. He remembers that when he was first elected a Member of Parliament, he

One of the prize features of modern Malaysia is the 13.5 km Pulau Pinang Bridge that links Pulau Pinang to the mainland. Crossing the spectacular bridge in this picture is a Proton Saga car, the highly successful design manufactured in Malaysia and one of the Prime Minister's own projects that will always be closely associated with Dr. Mahathir in the eyes of the Malaysian people. (*Robin Adshead*)



Leader of his Country

was fortunate enough not to have to earn a living from politics, as he had usually given away his monthly allowance of \$700 to meet the swell of demands for assistance from his constituents. These ranged from requests for money to pay for such things as transport, weddings and funerals, to straight donations to charity. He even had to spend a lot of his own money on meeting such requests, and says now: "There is never enough money, no matter what you are paid. If you keep on giving more, the demands increase. I knew I never had enough. There comes a time when you have to say 'no'.

This picture taken in Georgetown, Pulau Pinang, shows the unique combination of old and new that is Malaysia today. The old shop-houses and pedal trishaws mingle happily with the skyscrapers and modern cars and motorcycles to produce a pace of life that is entirely suitable to this peaceful island. It is exactly this mixture of tradition and modern convenience that has made Pinang a prime destination for international tourists, highlighted in 1990, "Visit Malaysia Year". (Robin Adshead)



Some people resent this, and this is one of the political problems."

The NEP made provision for better education and more opportunities for the under-privileged, the money being spent on schools, scholarships and infrastructure in the poverty-stricken areas. One State corporation, FELDA, was set up to satisfy the peasants' hunger for land. Although the use of land by the Malays had traditionally involved ownership of small areas, FELDA sought to reorganise traditional occupations so as to yield greater returns. Smallholdings were regarded as unprofitable and incapable of taking advantage of modern techniques.

It was essential to change the attitudes of the settlers on the new lands, and to make them accept the estate concept, with centralised processing of the products. For the Malays, unaccustomed to regimentation or centralisation of effort, the new concepts were a shock at first, but most of the land-hungry settlers have now adapted well. The Government realised, however, that there would always be people with vested interests who might try to persuade the settlers to sell off their holdings on the pretext of entering some other business, with the result that they would revert to their former landless unemployed status. The emphasis of the Government campaign, therefore, was to persuade the people that it was better for them to work for others within a larger establishment which would have a chance to compete with big business. The success of the campaign was shown by the swing towards working in factories and on estates by many bumiputeras who would otherwise have attempted to be self-employed, with the inevitable result that they would have continued to be poor and uncompetitive.

This rise in the factory workforce brought in its turn an urgent need for a programme of inexpensive housing for the new workers flocking to the urban areas. The Government insisted that developers provide low-cost

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housing through a cross-subsidy, in addition to medium- and high-cost housing. Although this programme has still not managed to catch up with the pressure of demand caused by the influx of workers and most of the newcomers will continue to have to find rented accommodation for the time being, or to live in a squatter area, economic growth will in its turn bring better wages and the workers will be better housed.

Among the first ventures into heavy industrialisation implemented by the Mahathir administration was the setting-up of the corporation to manufacture Malaysia's first national automobile, the Proton Saga. A joint Malaysian-Japanese production, the national car soon became a best-seller, not only in Malaysia but all over

In March 1989, while on a private visit to London, Dr. Mahathir visited one of the United Kingdom's leading distribution centres of the Proton Saga car. Sales of the Saga in Britain have already outpaced all forecasts, and demand for the Malaysian-built car is growing. (*Robin Adshead*)



the region as the marketing network spread. The car is now exported to Europe, Bangladesh, Brunei, New Zealand and Sri Lanka, and new models are in the process of design. As usual, the investment in this new area of Malaysian manufacturing has been carefully planned, and its progress is considered right on target.

Not all business ventures proceeded quite so smoothly, however. The collapse of the Hong Kong property market in 1982 revealed a series of massive losses by the Bank Bumiputera Finance (BMF) as a result of loans made to the Hong Kong-based Carrion group of companies.

In a recent interview, Dr. Mahathir reflected on this affair that came close to damaging the Government's credibility. "That was plain and straightforward crooked dealing on the part of the management," he said. "You have to trust people - you cannot run everything on your own. You have to appoint people, and you have to trust them. You make them directors of banks, managing directors of banks, and we have to trust them to run the banks properly. Of course it is possible to show figures at that time that the bank was doing very well, and the people who played around with money in Hong Kong were thinking that the trend in Hong Kong would go on for ever. At that time, it was a very bullish development in Hong Kong - no one expected the collapse.

"Then came the talk about 1997, and suddenly the thing collapsed. When the waters in the river recede, you see all the muck. Of course these things surface. If you buy a building for a certain sum of money, knowing, or at least thinking that you know, it is going to go up in price, and therefore you can sell it off and repay the money, and suddenly the price of that building goes down, you are caught. You have bought it at a high price, with borrowed money, and you can't pay it back. This was not done on a small scale - it was done on a massive scale. The lending was not done properly - this



During the Constitutional crisis, Dr. Mahathir addressed a number of huge rallies around the country, to explain the Government's position. This one, in January 1984, was held in Kuala Lumpur. (*New Straits Times*)

was something which the Bank should not have allowed to happen but felt it could get away with. When the Hong Kong economy took a dip, the whole thing was exposed."

Another major difficulty reared its head in the shape of a constitutional crisis between the Government and the Ruler. Unlike the British version, the Malaysian constitution is a written one, and states that the Ruler must show his assent to Bills by signing them when they are

presented to him by Parliament. This provision in effect, presents the Ruler with a means to frustrate the Government, should he wish to do so, by withholding his signature from new legislation. The catch lay in the fact that to change the law, the Government needed the consent, and subsequently the signature on the document, of the Ruler. But when the legislation was designed to amend this part of the Constitution, the new law was in effect asking the Ruler to consent to a reduction in his powers.

The King was naturally reluctant to sign the proposed amendment. The situation threatened to split the normally happy relationship between the Malay people and their rulers, and between the Ruler and UMNO. The Malay community is small enough for the State ruling families to be very close to their subjects, who have learnt how to treat with them on a regular basis, from the former feudal times up to the changing attitudes of the present day. The ruling families are regarded with great affection, trust and loyalty by the ordinary people, to whom they represent tradition and continuity. This bond is not easily broken, even by the coming of modern ideas and the fact that many Malays never come in contact with the rulers unless they meet a member of one of the royal families who is employed in commerce or the civil service.

In general, the Ruler had never refused to give his consent to legislation proposed by the Government. Foreseeing a time, however, when such a refusal might become crucial, Dr. Mahathir put forward a Bill that, among other amendments (such as the setting up of a Supreme Court in place of the Federal Court), would provide for the automatic passing of any Bill not signed by the Ruler within fifteen days. If after fifteen days, the Ruler had failed to sign in token of his consent, the Bill would be returned to Parliament and become law despite the lack of the Royal signature.

The refusal of the Ruler to sign this Bill incorporating the changes in the Constitution was backed by the

assembled Conference of Rulers. This immediately pitted Dr. Mahathir against the traditional Establishment, as the reluctance of the Ruler, from a mistaken sense of authority, to consent to legislation would prevent the Government from governing and allow the dangerous possibility that the people might become frustrated, with no outlet for their frustration but violence. The situation caused much soul-searching among Malays and called for a rapid solution so that the Government could continue to govern.

In a series of rallies around the country, Dr. Mahathir took the issue to the people, calling upon them for their support to defend democracy. Eventually a compromise was reached by which the Ruler might reject a Bill and return it to Parliament for further debate. If the Bill was then re-passed by Parliament with a two-thirds majority or more, the Bill would be forwarded to the Ruler for a second time, and would automatically become law after 30 days, even if the Ruler should once again withhold his consent. The Bill altering the Constitution was signed by the Deputy Ruler acting as King in the absence of the Ruler. The Mahathir Administration emerged as a true Parliamentary government, with the final right of legislation in the hands of the elected representatives of the people, rather than an autocracy.

Another attempt to frustrate the administration of Government has recently been made, by means of challenging Government actions in the Malaysian courts. In spite of a constitutional provision that no one may frustrate the government in the conduct of its work, the opposition and detractors of the Government have been using the courts to reverse Government decisions. A sewage contract in Penang was blocked because the court decided to investigate the process under which the contract had been awarded. Next, court action blocked the award of a contract for the North-South Highway, and the Government had to appeal. The lower court ruling was overturned, and the contract awarded, but it



The launch of the latest political manifesto is always a time to hold a Press conference. At this one, held to present the Barisan Nasional manifesto of 1982, Dr. Mahathir was photographed in company with Encik Ghafar Baba (now Deputy Prime Minister, but then the Barisan Nasional Director of Elections) and, nearest the camera, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, at that time the Barisan Nasional Treasurer. (*New Straits Times*)

took time, to say nothing of the costs incurred against the public purse.

The Government made some detention orders on the recommendations of the Police, who have always been regarded as the authority who can certify if there is a threat to security. On this occasion however, the Police decision was challenged, and the courts threw out the



Dr. Mahathir has addressed the United Nations General Assembly on several occasions to date, but this picture shows him during his first address to the world body, at the 37th regular session in 1982. (*New Straits Times*)

detention order, releasing detainees who had been considered to be a danger to the security of the country.

Under this overlapping of authority, the Government is hampered from carrying out its task, as in such an atmosphere anyone can apply for an injunction on the

grounds that the Government is doing something improper. But often, it is not feasible for Government to reveal everything about its actions without causing a public furore, and it becomes hard for Government officers to make even the smallest decision if they know that the decision will be challenged in the courts and reversed.

As Dr. Mahathir has remarked: "We are not questioning the authority of the courts, but in the past, the courts have not questioned the Government's right to make a decision. Of course, in the making of a decision, the fact that you say that there is a decision means that you have to make a choice between many alternatives. So if we choose one alternative, what is to prevent others, including the courts, from choosing another alternative? Therefore, there will be no decision that cannot be questioned - this is the problem we have got."

The Government is understandably concerned about the contention between authorities. Dr Mahathir wishes to see the reinstatement of the division in the running of Government, with the legislative wing, the administration and the judiciary. Each of these wings has its own role, and the judiciary should merely interpret the decisions of the legislative wing. "When the judiciary tends to make its own rules by resorting to unwritten laws like something so objective as human rights, then of course we cannot make laws," he comments. "We make one law, the court ignores the law and goes on to human rights and argues on the basis of something that is not at all related to the law under which we function, then we do not know where we stand with regard to any act on the part of the Government."

Such a state of affairs does not sit well with the Prime Minister, who has a very definite view of such issues as human rights, democracy and free speech. He has summed up his views as follows:

"Democracy is about the right of the majority. While the

majority should not oppress the minority, this does not mean that in the interest of not oppressing the minority, the majority should allow itself to be oppressed. The trend today is to so protect minority or individual rights until the majority loses its own rights in the process.

“Thus in the United States when someone started a cinema to show pornographic films in a quiet, conservative suburban community, the protest of the community was disregarded by the court. It felt that it would be a denial of the right of a person to earn a living. The right to free speech cannot be absolute. One cannot defame another person or instigate unrest and violence in a community. But it is not easy to draw a line between what is defamation and what is not, or when there is instigation and when not.

“Skillful innuendos and oblique suggestions effectively overcome the law on defamation or subversion. In case of doubt, the verdict is always in favour of the culprit. Over the years the desire to uphold so-called ‘democratic’ principles is such that democracies, especially in the new nations, are never stable. In the end, a state of anarchy sets in.

“If a democracy is to survive, the rights of the individuals must be subservient to those of the community. The best situation is of course when the individual knows just what are the limits of his rights, and stays within those limits. But if the community through its various organs including its elected government judge that he has overstepped the limit, then he must accept the strictures imposed upon him.

“A democracy provides safeguards whereby the Government as representative of the people cannot misuse the powers conferred on it in the interest of protecting the community. The greatest safeguard is the right and the ability of the community to dismiss the Government during elections. Other safeguards are the courts and an independent administration which can and do negate unconstitutional actions on the part of the Government. But ultimately the people must decide if the Government does wrong.

“With these safeguards the individual is safe as long as his actions do not harm the community. Democracy would be negated if the community as the majority is rendered subordinate to the excesses of the individual.”



This photograph catches the Prime Minister looking well-rested and relaxed, in the grounds of his residence in Kuala Lumpur, not many weeks after his heart bypass operation. He is seen here fit and well again, refuting the stories put about by his opponents that he would never recover his former health. (*Robin Adshead*)

Dr. Mahathir is no stranger to criticism. There are always critics of any political leader, especially if he is strong. The Prime Minister feels hurt by unjustified or unsubstantiated criticism, but agrees that constructive criticism is good for everyone. He adds: "Unless we are criticised, we will not realise that we have deviated or gone off course. That is why there must be opposition parties in a democracy." He declares he is able to listen for any length of time to criticism provided that he gets a chance to refute it when it is, in his view, unjustified. On the other hand, he agrees, the criticism might be helpful in stopping him in going on with something that was not as good as he had thought.

The one accusation that Dr. Mahathir feels keenly, and considers most unjust, is that of being a dictator. He says that a leader who has no firm stand is not a leader. "Accordingly a leader must try to get his views accepted as much as possible. If he succeeds in persuading his co-workers, it does not make him a dictator. It merely makes him a successful leader. There is a difference between strong leadership and dictatorship. However, it is not easy to point this out to people, especially the detractors and the envious."

He is also aware, from his long experience, that politicians in authority gradually become unpopular. Throughout the lifespan of an administration, popularity tends to remain with the opposition, with those individuals and parties who because they are not in power are never called upon to provide anything for the people, because the people know that they are powerless to provide anything. The administration in power is assumed 'however' to have the power to solve all their problems quickly, and it is misunderstood and resented by the people when these 'easy' solutions are not immediately forthcoming.

Dr. Mahathir has learnt to reduce such resentment by never saying 'No' too directly. He also knows that this tactic merely staves off the moment when the would-

be recipient eventually discovers that he has not got what he asked for, but by then a compromise has usually been worked out. His signpost to indicate that his Government has achieved the correct balance is when he discovers that every section of the community is displeased with a particular measure. As he puts it: "You can say things are going well when everyone is unhappy with his lot. You cannot give everyone everything they ask for. You can only give a portion of what they ask for. If you find that a section of the people is extremely happy with their lot, you can be sure that you have been unfair. It is very important in a multi-racial country not to be seen to be favouring one race over another - you have to compromise."

Government popularity began to wane when the downturn in world economy began to hit Malaysian export markets. The initial Government reaction was Keynesian, to become expansionary in order to sustain growth. This was done four times, with the Government borrowing money and spending freely, until it became clear that the recession in world trade was continuing longer than had been foreseen. Although growth rates had been maintained at around five to six per cent, Government borrowing had increased, although the loans came nowhere near the rate of some Third World debtor countries. None the less, the administration decided that it was time to tell Malaysians that the recession had to be weathered in a style the country was able to afford, and Government spending was slashed dramatically. Naturally, there were contractions in the economy, and the growth rate slowed to a negative position in 1985.

As the world recession deepened and the growth rate trickled to a halt, Dr. Mahathir faced political problems at home, within his own party. His Deputy, Datuk Musa Hitam, resigned precipitously in March 1986, causing a split in the UMNO ranks. In the General Election of 1986, however, the Barisan Nasional coalition parties



Dr. Mahathir has always campaigned for office in the certain knowledge that the people will be the ultimate judge of his policies. In this picture from the run-up to the 1986 elections, he hosts a Press conference looking supremely confident, in spite of the problems caused by the resignation of Datuk Musa Hitam – a look that was entirely justified by his sweeping victory. (*New Straits Times*)

swept the board, strengthening the hand of the Prime Minister, who then appointed Encik Abdul Ghafar Baba as his Deputy.

In the period before the world economy began to recover, Dr. Mahathir's Government made significant changes in policies regarding foreign investment, removing laws and policies which obstructed private business. Government spending was reduced by privatisation, by reducing intake into Government service, by curtailment of Government activities and by reducing subsidies across the board.

All these remedies helped tide the country over until there was some recovery in the commodities market and general recovery worldwide. Malaysian exports began to increase, due to the diversification into manufacturing world wide and this time, the country was no longer dependent on primary products. Malaysia was already a net exporter of petroleum, and although the contraction in the price of oil had cost the country dearly, the recovery in the world economy offered the chance to redress the balance. Once more a high growth rate was achieved, from five per cent in 1987 up to 8.7 per cent in 1988. The forecast for 1989 is seven per cent.

If there is a further downturn in the world economy, Malaysia is better prepared today than ever before. During the colonial period, the Malaysian economy was almost entirely dependent on rubber and tin. Today, the country is the world's largest producer of palm oil and one of the largest exporters of tropical timber. Other exports include petroleum, cocoa and fruit; even the rubber and tin industries have been transformed by the addition of manufacturing facilities which utilise the raw material so as to export value-added finished goods.

Through all the trials and tribulations of political disagreements within his own party and the pressures of world affairs upon the stability of Malaysia's economic life, the Prime Minister had remained true to his principles. He had stood firm against criticism that might have dismayed a lesser man and had emerged in a position of even greater strength. He has various means of coping with the stress and loneliness of com-

mand, maintaining a philosophical attitude towards failure. He accepts that failure and success are part of life and does not get too excited or depressed over either aspect. If he fails, he says, he simply waits for a better opportunity and tries again.

He mitigates the loneliness of his supreme office by holding frequent consultations with his colleagues, regarding collective decisions as a means of reducing the strain at the top. But he knows that it is important for the man at the top to accept ultimate responsibility for the consequences of policies or actions taken. His view of this final burden of responsibility is that it is tolerable only if there is a strong conviction of the correctness of what he is doing.

He snatches periods of rest whenever possible. He has an ability to doze off whenever an opportunity presents itself, which, he finds, reduces strain. Although he describes himself as emotional, he is always able to control these emotions by simply accepting the situation. This control sometimes leads others to see him as cold and unfeeling, but in reality, there is a very human face behind the public mask.

One of the penalties of public life is that he can no longer spend as much time with his family as he would like. Whenever possible however, Dr. Mahathir goes home to be with his wife and children, and almost invariably lunches with them as his residence is only minutes away from his office. He brings other members of his family together whenever he can, holding 'feasts' on traditional occasions and religious holidays. His children come from wherever they are working or studying to be with their parents for holidays, and the close relationship of the family is maintained in spite of his heavy work load.

Like any other public figure, Dr. Mahathir has made sacrifices to his job. Wherever he goes, he is always accompanied by others, whether secretaries, aides or security men. Gone are the carefree days when he could



As the holder of the highest office in the land, the Prime Minister must be protected. His protection team of police experts are all treated as part of his extended "family", even to accompanying him on his customary walk from his office back to the Sri Perdana, his official residence in Kuala Lumpur. The bodyguards often are surprised by the Prime Minister's energy, even after a long day at the office. (*New Straits Times*)

go shopping by himself or with his wife, just a face in the crowd. He remembers, almost wistfully, the time in London when he 'escaped' for a while through a side door to walk the streets alone for a brief moment of peaceful anonymity. Now he tells how in New York where security for visiting VIPs is strict, he had either to submit to all the rules of being escorted, or dispense with escorts altogether and allow the security people to disclaim any responsibility if something should happen to him. The result of accepting the security restrictions was that the only thing he saw during a visit to the Smithsonian Museum was the back of the 6 foot 4 inch security officer elbowing the way through the throng in front of him.

He accepts these restrictions with some resignation. His own security is a permanent but low-profile presence, around his house, his office and his person when he travels, but all the officers are treated as part of his extended 'family', and together with the personal staff and drivers form part of the entourage with which the Prime Minister is now completely familiar. He has forged close links with his private staff and feels at ease with them around him. They clearly reciprocate this regard and close ranks to form a tangible protective barrier around him, shielding him from unwanted intrusion.

He makes a point of travelling with his wife when on duty. She, more than anyone, is responsible for giving him the support any public figure needs 'behind the scenes', although she says he does not discuss political issues at home as much as she would like. This is because he does not want to worry her when the political situation is not good, but when he does talk to her, she adds, it is really to get it out of his system rather than to ask for advice.

Dr. Siti Hasmah denies ever wanting to be a politician in her own right, but is a member of UMNO and supports it fully, without wanting to hold a post in it or be



The Sultan of Johore poses with the Prime Minister and Datin Seri Dr. Siti Hasmah at the end of the rally to mark the 43rd Anniversary of the founding of UMNO. Dr. Siti Hasmah is a fully supportive member of UMNO, but has no intention of entering politics on her own account. *(Robin Adshead)*

actively involved. She helps her husband in his political campaigns, however, always following him to listen to his speeches first before going to campaign for him among women's group. She also speaks on his behalf at functions whenever he is unable to attend himself. They have both found over the years that a wife's presence in political or non-political functions is important for good rapport with the people and to gain their support.



A family reunion brought all the children of the Prime Minister together for this photograph. Seated are Marina (left) and Melinda. Standing, from the left, are Mukhriz, Mirzan and Mokhzani.

Mahathir of Malaysia

She is a strong believer in any movement that will improve the status of women, protect women and children, improve their health and give equal opportunity to hold jobs when equally qualified. She qualifies her support by saying: "Islam encourages the freedom of women but not to usurp men. I hesitate to 'fight' for equal rights knowing that at some period of a woman's life she will not be able to perform efficiently. A woman should accept the best opportunity given to her in this world or else sacrifice her femininity, marriage and family for total involvement in a man's world. Then

This delightfully informal picture from the family album shows Datin Seri Dr. Siti Hasmah and her children in Cannes in 1985. From the left, they are Mukhriz, Marina, Mokhzani, Datin Seri and Mirzan. (*Noordin Bachik*)





The two latest member of the Prime Minister's family, their son Mazhar and daughter Maizura, pose with their parents in the gardens of the Sri Perdana for an informal family portrait. (Robin Adshead)

there will be no more bargains or condescensions." It is also her view that in the home, the husband is still head of the family.

Their children are well-balanced individuals who do not clamour for a place in the limelight and glamour of their father's high position. While their mother admits she would advise them against entering politics, their father would have liked his children to take more of an interest in political affairs. The boys are interested, but not to the point of wanting to be involved. They believe,



Doctor, wife and mother – Datin Seri Dr. Siti Hasmah plays many roles, supporting her husband in everything, even making speeches on his behalf when he cannot be present. (*Robin Adshead*)

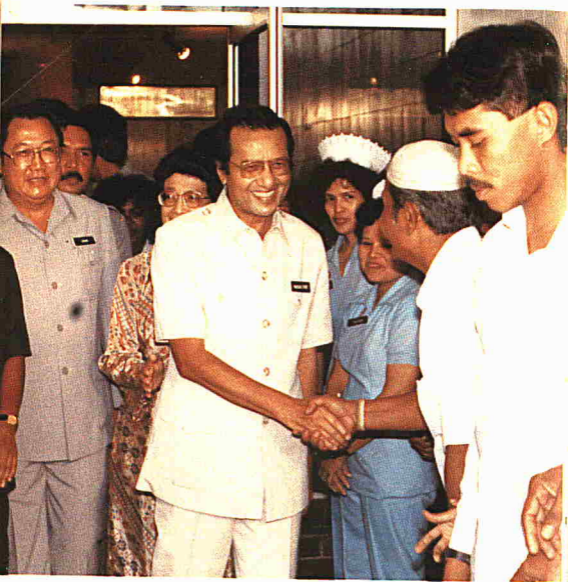
like their mother, that there are other ways of helping the people and contributing to the nation and the community than politics.

Dr. Siti Hasmah presents her own view of her husband's character in adversity in a forthright manner. Her observations are almost clinical, as befits a doctor who has acted as personal physician to her husband, and are thus more revealing and accurate than the normal remarks of a supportive wife. She says: "The Prime Minister is blessed with an ability to deal with crises and difficult situations with calmness, tolerance and patience, which to me, can sometimes be infuriating. His usual remark that 'the world will not come to an end' has probably helped him to withstand difficult situations. He treats each problem like a medical problem.

"His handling of the Constitutional crisis in 1983, the Deputy Prime Minister's resignation in 1986 followed by the UMNO Presidency election and the subsequent disruptions were not matters that any Prime Minister would have liked to handle, but Mahathir took it as part of his duty and responsibility to overcome it calmly and did it 'his way'.

"The latest adverse situation concerned his own health. He calmly informed me that he had shoulder pains which were persistent, and he wanted a physician to see him. He was calm when the electro-cardiogram indicated hospitalisation as an immediate measure. When after a week in the cardiac care unit an arteriogram indicated coronary by-pass as the next step to management, he calmly called the Cardiac Surgeon and told him precisely that he wanted the operation to be done in Kuala Lumpur and by the Cardiac Surgeon himself. His calmness in making that decision startled the family, friends and foe!"

The severity of this operation might have led a less pragmatic man to an immediate desire to retire on the grounds of ill-health. Not so Dr. Mahathir. As a doctor himself, he knew that this was not something he could



This was the scene as the Prime Minister left hospital after a successful coronary bypass operation in early 1989. Dr. Mahathir is all smiles as he shakes hands with the staff of the General Hospital in Kuala Lumpur where the operation was carried out. (*New Straits Times*)

Leader of his Country



Once the Premier was home again, many of his friends and colleagues called on him to wish him a speedy recovery. Amongst them was the Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Lee Kuan Yew. (*New Straits Times*)

Mahathir of Malaysia

ignore in the same way as he had frequently ignored his doctor's advice, especially with regards to resting. He always wants to avoid the adverse speculation that would accompany his hospitalisation for any minor ailment. He is blessed with a strong constitution that allows him to tolerate mild discomfort, and regards his resistance to hospitalisation as "not stubbornness, but the emergencies of a sensitive political situation."

On this occasion, the situation was serious enough for him to agree to let go the helm for the time it would take him to recuperate. It is not easy for him to delegate, as he likes to see that things are done just as he has envisaged them. The biggest obstacle to progress, he considers, is the refusal of people to accept the obvious.

As soon as he was fit enough to travel, the Prime Minister and his wife left for London on a private visit and a short holiday. They were seen off at Subang International Airport in true Malaysian style by a vast crowd of well-wishers. (*New Straits Times*)





Wherever the Prime Minister goes, whether on an official visit such as this one to Sabah, he makes copious notes on the things he sees. These notes, jokingly referred to as "Messages from the Sponsor", remind him of the points he wishes to bring to the attention of his Cabinet colleagues at their regular meetings. (*New Straits Times*)

He has always believed that to be worthwhile, an idea must be implemented or at least personally supervised by its originator. Only the originator knows exactly what he wants and what should be done to achieve the objective.

As an example of his eagerness to remain involved, he always carries a small notebook on his frequent trips within the capital and around the country, in which he jots details of things he has seen that appear to him to be wrong. These may be about something as trivial as a blocked drain, or a badly-sited bus-stop but they are brought to the attention of the relevant Minister at the

start of each Cabinet, in the period now known as the "messages from the sponsor" session. All Ministers have now adopted the notebook-carrying habit, finding it indispensable when keeping track of the Prime Minister's and their own projects.

When he does delegate (as he frequently has to when the idea involves several different Ministries), he still feels a great need to know what is being done. His Ministers all understand this need and keep him totally informed of their actions. He has assembled a Cabinet team that functions well and whose members all believe in the same thing and have the same objectives. All of them understand his policies, making delegation easier.

It was this team that functioned, in the Prime Minister's absence on sick leave, under the temporary leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister. Opponents of the Government tried to spread a few rumours about how "the patient" was not responding well to treatment, but they were confounded when the leader returned from abroad, looking fit and well and capable of walking five kilometres a day.

In May 1989 the Prime Minister attended a huge rally held to celebrate the 43rd Anniversary of the founding of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). His arrival at the Istana Besar in Johor Bahru, scene of the original announcement of the formation of the party, was greeted by 120 party representatives from every State dressed in traditional attire, and the procession made its way to the Istana steps to the beat of 400 drums. The celebration, attended by thousands of party supporters from all over the country, was highlighted by

The 43rd Anniversary of the formation of UMNO was the occasion for much pomp and ceremony in Johore in May 1989. Thousands of UMNO supporters turned out in national costume, to be inspected in their ranks by the Prime Minister and President of UMNO, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. (*Robin Adshead*)

ITA

TO MINGGOKAN
UMNO UMNO



Mahathir of Malaysia

an hour-long speech given by Dr. Mahathir in his capacity as President of UMNO.

He reminded party members that UMNO's origins were rooted in a desire to change the status of the Malays and that UMNO had succeeded in uniting the Malays in a way that no other organisation had ever done. The success of UMNO had enabled the Malays to

The Prime Minister's speech lasted over an hour, and was warmly applauded by the vast crowd. Despite his recent operation, the Prime Minister never faltered, and went on to a reception in the evening with no sign of fatigue. (*Robin Adshead*)





Members of UMNO paraded with their banners representing various UMNO branches from all over the country.... (Robin Adshead)

gain political control of their own country and to improve their economic position. He emphasised the struggles that the founders of UMNO had had to endure to ensure that the party became the bastion of the people and indicated to the youth of Malaysia today 'who have



... and a huge UMNO flag was borne in procession to be raised with full ceremonial to a specially strengthened flagpole. (*Robin Adshead*)

no memories of those struggles' that they should acknowledge and be grateful for them.

The Prime Minister's speech lasted over an hour. It was delivered in a voice strong and confident in its message, never faltering, a voice which gave not the smallest sign that the speaker had undergone major heart surgery not three months before. During the entire rally, the Prime Minister and his wife remained standing, under the blazing Malaysian sun through the

heat of the afternoon as did the party members and delegates at the gathering. The occasion was historic, the ceremonial impressive, and the Prime Minister's participation significant of his continuing ability to recover from adversity and return to carry out his duties as powerfully as ever.

Debut on the World Stage

Looking around Malaysia, it is sometimes difficult to remember that this country only gained independence just over 30 years ago. Anyone who was familiar with Malaya under British rule, even after the birth of the new Malaysia, would be best advised, if they return as a

Making an official visit to China in 1985, Dr. Mahathir was entertained to tea by senior Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping. The Prime Minister is now well known to all other Asian leaders, and is seen by them as a leading spokesman on Third World affairs. (*Noordin Bachik*)





Mrs Nancy Reagan, wife of the President of the United States paid a call on Dr. Mahathir and Datin Seri Dr. Siti Hasmah in the Sri Perdana during Mrs Reagan's official visit to Kuala Lumpur in 1986 as part of her duties with the Anti-Drug Administration. The Reagans share Malaysia's abhorrence of illegal drugs. (*Official White House Photograph*)

nostalgic tourist, to regard the country today as somewhere they have never been to; any familiarity with the topography should be regarded as purely coincidental. The last decade has seen an acceleration in the pace of progress, and in general, the foot on the accelerator has been that of Dr. Mahathir.

It is not only the new look of the capital, Kuala Lumpur, with its wide roads and tall buildings each set

in attractive grounds. There is a different atmosphere, an almost tangible sense of nationhood, of confidence in being Malaysian, that strikes the "tourist from the past" as being in sharp contrast with the attitudes of the darker days of the Emergency and Confrontation. The prosperity is plain to see – the smart shops, the department stores bustling with shoppers, the streams of cars and motor-cycles in the busy streets – but the underlying feeling is much more than this. There is a sense of purpose, of belonging and of being a nation that the world respects.

That respect comes from the knowledge that although the Malaysians were left with an orderly country with prosperous rubber and tin industries, they soon taught themselves not only how to run their country in the way in which they wanted it run, but how, and what, to add to the prosperous industries to ensure their survival in a world economy.

The hardest thing for Malaysia to do was probably to stop being introspective, wrapped in a cocoon of local affairs and politics, and to become outward looking, to contemplate the world from the position of a full member of the global community. That Malaysia has now emerged fully from the colonial shadows into the sunlight of world status is a tribute to her people and to her leader.

When Dr. Mahathir became Prime Minister in 1981, he faced a multitude of problems all clamouring for his immediate attention. He took steps to serve notice on the world that Malaysia was no longer going to be pushed around and taken for granted, but would speak her own mind in the world forum, to no one system or ideology. He concentrated first on ensuring that the country remained stable and prosperous, and to do that he had to expand the economic base. He wanted Malaysia, a producer of rubber, tin, palm oil and other commodities, to be no longer dependent on the world economy in order to keep growing. If she was still tied to

such an economy, her fortunes would fluctuate as the tide of world trade ebbed and flowed. This was indeed seen very clearly and at some cost not only to individual Malaysians, but to the country as a whole, when the downturn came in 1985 and Government spending had to be reduced to what the Exchequer would bear.

When the upturn came and recovery was begun in 1987, it was hastened because of the plans laid by the Mahathir Administration to diversify Malaysia's economic base. The swing to industrialisation, the co-ordination of effort by Government and private enterprise and the campaigns to change the work ethics of the ordinary Malaysian were all seen to play their part in changing not only the face of Malaysia, but the impression the country gave to potential investors. Unlike many ex-colonies, Malaysia can boast a strong Government, unwavering in its ideals, a sound economy that shows foresight and good planning and its own form of democracy that can maintain a stability other multi-racial countries have come to envy. It presents its credentials as a moderate but progressive country, able to govern itself well and democratically, and its citizens cannot but respond to the enhanced role their country is playing in world affairs.

Dr. Mahathir has taken pains to show Malaysia as a non-aligned country. He has been critical of both East and West and has made no attempt to join any particular bloc. Instead, he has striven to make Malaysia more a part of her own region, becoming influential within ASEAN, the Association of South-East Asian Nations. He has also, through the 'Look East' policy, encouraged his people to emulate successful countries within the Asian region and through a temporary and well-considered policy of "Buy British Last," demonstrated Malaysia's dissatisfaction with Britain's dismissive attitude towards her former colony.

He initiated the South-South Commission, with the

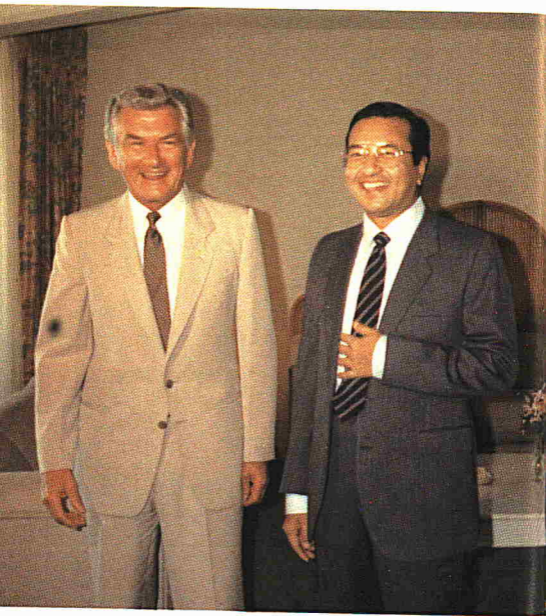
Mahathir of Malaysia



Dr. Mahathir has the credibility to meet with East and West alike. He is shown above in a rare photograph with General Ne Win, the Burmese leader, in 1988, and, right, with Dr. Henry Kissinger. (*Noordin Bachik (above), and Prime Minister's Office (right)*)



aim of increasing trade between the countries in the Southern Hemisphere who shared either a common ex-colonial heritage or a lack of economic viability that made them prey to the larger countries in matters of trade and aid. He singled out these countries in his 1988 Singapore Lecture, saying: "Poor as they may be, the



Southern Hemisphere interests brought Dr. Mahathir and Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke together. (*Noordin Bachik*)

countries of the South together still constitute a huge market. But the key word is 'together'. Alone their individual market is too small to influence the attitude of the rich. It is therefore important that the countries of the South at least present a united front, if not unite."

His aim is to reduce the dependency on exports from those countries directly into Western markets and to get them away from a position of debtor slavery caused by the massive loans made by Western banks and other organisations.

He is aware that these countries cannot stop trading with the North, but he believes that a fair proportion of the trade in goods and services can be redirected to the South for mutual benefit. He added, in his Singapore Lecture: "There will be tremendous obstacles. Dumping, aid and grants by the rich North are but a few of the obstacles to trade between the South. But if there is a will, a resolve to correct an unfair and inequitable wealth distribution, many things can be done. At the very least the threat to buy South will push the North to sell their goods and services at more reasonable prices."

Malaysia has found the United Nations to be an excellent forum in which to speak for the emerging countries, and since gaining a seat on the Security Council (in 1988) is even better placed to be a spokesman for her region. Dr. Mahathir has addressed the United Nations on many occasions, his latest speech being delivered to the 43rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly in October 1988. In his speech, he drew attention to Malaysia's resolute foreign policy and reiterated her attitude to such crucial topics as the Palestinian problem, apartheid in South Africa, and the importance of keeping Antarctica free from exploitation.

His speech set out Malaysia's foreign policy very succinctly. Essentially, this reflects the country's character as a developing, non-aligned nation, wishing to cultivate friendly relations with all in order to



Dr. Mahathir and Datin Seri Dr. Siti Hasmah went to meet Malaysian troops leaving for the United Nations Peace-keeping Mission in Namibia in April 1989. Malaysian troops have served with the United Nations three times. (*New Straits Times*)

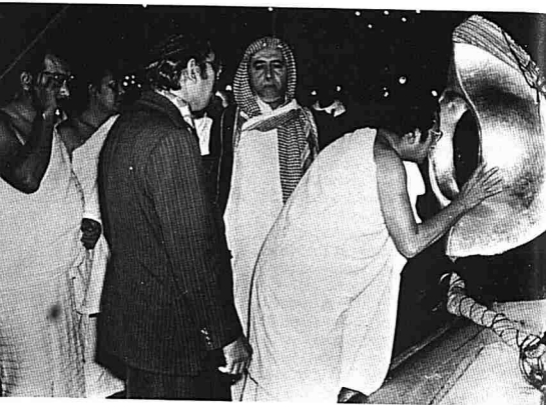
maintain peaceful conditions for economic growth at all levels. In a world dominated by the super-powers, Dr. Mahathir believes that there is a great need for the Third World to combine to make its views heard and its presence felt. He also believes in supporting the United Nations to the full and has ensured that Malaysian troops are available to the UN peace-keeping forces whenever necessary, Malaysian soldiers are currently serving in the United Nations force in Namibia, the

third time they have worn the Blue Beret.

He takes a balanced view of the risks posed to Malaysian lives by service with the UN forces. "Malaysians are familiar with having their army serve with the UN forces," he states. "They served in the Congo before. Malaysians generally are proud to have their troops serve with the UN. Malaysian troops have fought continuously against the communist insurgents in the country, and off and on, fatal incidents occur. The relatives and the people in general understand that this can happen. A military career is not just to earn an income. If there are casualties among Malaysian troops in Namibia, they will understand that it is due to their doing their duty. Malaysian troops and their families have been told that they are not going on a picnic. They know that they are carrying out a serious duty which involves real risks."

He does not think, however, that the United Nations would be better served by maintaining a standing force. "It is wrong to expect the United Nations to police the world. It can only be effective if there is a degree of consent on the part of the parties in conflict. Hence the need for negotiations and agreement before UN 'supervision' can be effective. But conflicting parties invariably seek to gain some advantage over their opponents during negotiations. The result is that loopholes immediately appear on implementation. This should not cause a loss of faith in the UN. Corrections will have to be made along the way. In time, with perseverance, the UN will achieve what it sets out to do."

As for the major powers not paying their dues to the United Nations, he considers that "only world opinion can provide the moral pressure that will force the big nations to pay their dues and respect the the United Nations. The moderate, small, neutral nations who have no specific axe to grind must play a greater role and not abdicate in favour of the more vociferous and extreme ones."



The Prime Minister is a devout Muslim, and was accorded the rare honour of entering the Kaabah when he performed the *umrah* in Mecca in 1982. He is seen here kissing the Hajarul Aswad. (*New Straits Times*)

As a Muslim, Dr. Mahathir sides strongly with the Palestinians, laying the blame for all the regional trouble in the Middle East squarely on Israeli intransigence. He speaks out against the continued Israeli occupation of Arab lands in every possible forum, calling for an international peace conference on the Middle East with the participation of all parties including the PLO.

Similarly, he is an ardent supporter of black African aspirations in South Africa and actively seeks the total

destruction of the "evil system of apartheid." Through his efforts, Malaysia has channelled funds to provide assistance to black South Africans and to the 'front-line states' to assist them in coping with the destabilisation caused by South Africa, and to help them cope with the possible effects which the imposition of comprehensive sanctions on South Africa would have on them. The aim of Malaysia's policy on South Africa is that a multi-racial, tolerant and fair-minded government should replace the all-white ruling body. There should be reconciliation, and the whites must participate fully in the democratic life of the nation. Inter-tribal fighting in African states should be settled by the formation of coalition governments representing the tribes.

Like other countries in its region, Malaysia has been the objective of thousands of Vietnamese refugees seeking either escape from the present communist rulers of Vietnam, or simply better opportunities in another country. The burden imposed on the Malaysian economy is great, and such an influx of refugees, for whatever reason, is considered intolerable by Malaysia and the other recipient countries. The problem is an international one, which can only be solved by reaching an understanding with the Government of Vietnam by which the 'boat people' may be repatriated without danger. Malaysia plays a leading role in the International Conference on Indochinese Refugees and the 'boat people'.

As a country with considerable recent experience in counter-insurgency, Malaysia's defence policies are firmly fixed towards maintaining adequate forces to deter any would-be aggressor. Dr. Mahathir states categorically that "Non-alignment does not mean exposing the country to future risks." Accordingly, now that the communist guerillas have been defeated, the Malaysian forces, who were largely armed and equipped for anti-guerilla warfare, are being retrained in conventional defence. The air force will be receiving Tornado

multi-role combat aircraft, and the navy, now required to patrol the newly-acquired Exclusive Economic zone, will acquire new ships and equipment to defend not so much against hostile forces as against pirates, poachers and drug smugglers.

Dr. Mahathir says: "Once upon a time we had ambitious neighbours who wanted to destroy us. There is no guarantee that this cannot happen again." Countries throughout the region possess large armed forces, and there is still conflict in much of South East Asia, not far from Malaysia's northern border with Thailand.

It also does not escape the notice of observers of the defence scene that Malaysia's neighbour to the south, Singapore, has a large standing army with plenty of armoured vehicles. Stuck on a relatively small island, there is nowhere for that armour to go except northward over the Johore Causeway, and it is known that should Malaysia be invaded by a foreign power, Singapore's tactics would include 'forward defence', meaning fighting on Malaysian soil. Should that situation arise, Malaysia would like to reserve the option whether or not to accept Singaporean 'help'. With Switzerland and Sweden to draw on as prime examples of the well-armed neutral country, Malaysia is now seeking to re-equip her armed forces with as much equipment as she can afford. The Mahathir Administration, knowing that even the great powers cannot finance all the equipment their defence forces claim they need in order to be effective, nevertheless cannot be accused of leaving Malaysia unprotected.

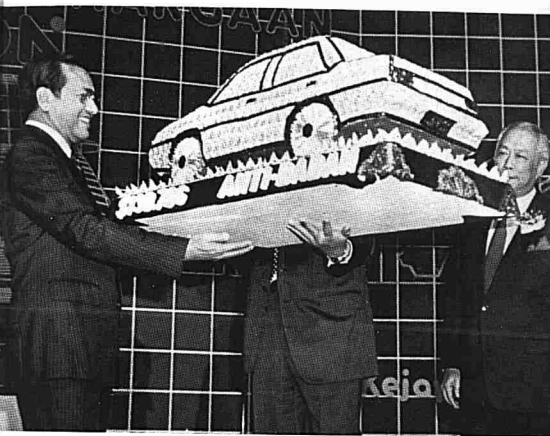
A more insidious enemy is the traffic in drugs. Malaysia, under the administration of Dr. Mahathir, has taken a resolute and uncompromising stand against all forms of drug-trafficking and the Prime Minister is seen among world leaders as a statesman who is at the forefront of the fight against drugs. His status as a known anti-drug campaigner was enhanced in June



Dr. Mahathir's return to Kuala Lumpur from Vienna in 1987 was marked by scenes of unprecedented acclamation at Subang International Airport. The Prime Minister, who had been made President of the International Conference of Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, was given a hero's welcome by his fellow-Malaysians, and (*overleaf*) was awarded the trappings of a Malay warrior Chieftain, including the *kris* (sword) and traditional headgear. (*New Straits Times*)



1987 when he was made President of the International Conference of Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Vienna. He sees drug abuse as a problem that no country can hope to deal with alone. Traffic in drugs world-wide now seems to be on the increase, with high production in both South America and the 'Golden Triangle' of Burma, Laos and Thailand, and the profits are high. Malaysia's hard line on drug offences,



The Anti-Drugs campaign in Malaysia is unrelenting, and donations are made by people in all walks of life to assist in fighting this insidious enemy. Here the Prime Minister is shown accepting a "cash-rich" miniature Proton Saga as a contribution to the anti-drug cause. (*New Straits Times*)

however, is now known all over the globe and is taken by all as an example of the political will that must be exerted by all nations if the threat to the world's young people is to be averted. The problem can be partially combatted by increasing awareness of the dangers of drugs and the fact that the war against drugs begins with each individual person and family.

By making his presence felt on the world stage, Dr.



The British Prime Minister, Mrs Margaret Thatcher, is regarded by Dr. Mahathir as the current world leader in terms of effectiveness in government. They share many of the same views and opinions, and have a high respect for one another. *(New Straits Times)*

Mahathir has earned the respect of many of the world's leaders. He has made State and private visits to many countries, in the West and in the Eastern Bloc, and can

claim to be on good terms with many heads of government and persons of influence within the various nations. He himself regards the British Prime Minister Mrs Margaret Thatcher as being the current world leader in terms of effectiveness in government and the Soviet leader Mr Mikhail Gorbachev in terms of statesmanship.

Spearheaded by such a dynamic leader, Malaysia has assumed a new image overseas. The hitherto low profile has been raised and more people now recognise Malaysia as having a stable political base, a thriving economy, a labour force rapidly gaining in skill and, not least, a beautiful country for tourists to visit. This latter aspect will be raised further in 1990, when an influx of tourists is expected to respond to the publicity for "Visit Malaysia Year." Dr. Mahathir is confident that the infrastructure is already in place to support this increase in tourism, but has nevertheless instituted a programme to provide more hotels and other facilities to cater for the expected increase in the number of visitors. A campaign is also being conducted, as an added reminder to the normally polite Malaysians, to persuade the people as a whole to make tourists feel welcome. The Government feels that the ordinary people of the country will benefit from the higher tourist revenue through the 'trickle down' effect - the tourist dollars being spent will mean more trade and profit for local businesses and hence higher revenue for the Government to spend, among other things, on more local projects.

This heightened profile is also designed to attract investment in the improving economy. Such investment, and indeed the overall growth in manufacturing and exports, must be carefully monitored, as Dr. Mahathir is not keen to have Malaysia classified as a Newly Industrialised Country (NIC) just yet. Such a tag would mean all kinds of pressures being applied against Malaysian goods by the richer countries, who, according



Tourism is beginning to play a more prominent role in contributing to Malaysia's balance of payments. "Visit Malaysia Year" in 1990 highlights the rich cultural heritage and varying folklore to be found in the country, typified by this lovely Sabah lass in her traditional costume. Dr. Mahathir encourages the presentation to tourists of folkloric shows, realising that without such outlets, the old customs might well disappear under the pressure of modern life. (*New Straits Times*)



The beautiful beaches of Malaysia are becoming a byword in tourist circles. While the East Coast has the highest reputation for vast expanses of sand, sea and sky, the West Coast can also boast fine vistas, such as this one at Port Dickson, only 100 kilometers from Kuala Lumpur. (*Robin Adshead*)

to the Prime Minister, invented the idea of the NIC “so as to find an excuse to keep developing countries from ever being developed.” Malaysia’s aim, he says, is gradually to improve her economic performance in order to benefit her people. Per capita income in Malaysia is now US\$1900, whereas to be classified as a so-called NIC the per capita income must be in the region of

Dewan Merdeka
Merdeka Hall



This historic group photograph of Malaysian leadership stands in the Prime Minister's outer office. It shows Dr. Mahathir and his wife in company with two of his illustrious predecessors. From the left of the picture are: Toh Puan Suhaila (wife of Tun Hussein Onn), Tun Hussein Onn, (third Prime Minister of Malaysia), Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, (first Prime Minister), Datin Seri Dr. Siti Hasmah, Dr. Mahathir, Datuk Musa Hitam (at rear) and Encik Anwar Ibrahim, (Minister of Education).
(Prime Minister's Office)

US\$5-7000. Malaysia still has a long way to go, but it is the Prime Minister's fervent hope that the developed countries will not lower the current standards to catch Malaysia in the NIC net and then apply trade restrictions against her.

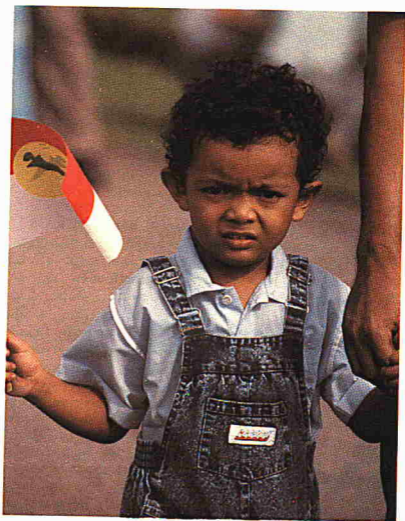
A View of the Future

Since coming to power in 1981, the Prime Minister has led a Government which can take much credit for presenting Malaysia as a stable, developing nation. In eight years, the country has seen improvements in the personal well-being of the people, has weathered the storms of an international recession and is set fair towards future success with an economy already recovering to nearly the pre-recession levels.

Obviously, much still remains to be done, and the Prime Minister is not just resting on his laurels. Guiding his country into the 21st Century is the task he has set himself, and he means to achieve it before he retires. Malaysia is a stable and peaceful country in a region of turmoil, but she will continue to need firm control by experienced hands in order to remain in such an enviable state.

Although he has no plans at present for his ultimate retirement, Dr. Mahathir knows just how he would like to see Malaysia poised on the day he steps down from office. "Malaysia should be," he states, "on the threshold of an era of political stability with rapid economic growth in which only a catastrophe of considerable proportions would be able to derail it from its course." The nation should be maintaining a forceful and respected position in international affairs due to its performance at home and abroad.

He will continue to fight for the advancement of the Malays until they are equally advantaged with the non-bumiputeras. He is committed to the eradication of poverty and considers that what is needed most is better



This small boy, photographed at the UMNO rally in Johor Bahru in 1989, represents the future of Malaysia. The good quality of his clothing indicates prosperity unheard of thirty years ago, and the high standards of Malaysian education will ensure that he will be fit to take his place as an adult in tomorrow's world. He will also be able to tell his grandchildren that when he was a boy, his father took him to hear a speech by Dr. Mahathir, fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia. (*Robin Adshead*)

education and more opportunities. His views on this are clear. "The chronically poor cannot be made to improve their lot. But their children can. Eradication of poverty will take time. In the meantime the national economy must be stimulated to grow at a faster rate in order to increase changing wealth and to provide opportunities for new generations. Traditional occupations that can support only subsistence living must be reorganised so as to yield better returns. Proportionately less people should be involved in low return occupations. The rest must move into more lucrative employment."

Such employment must include more jobs in such industries as car manufacturing. Since the initial wave of criticism and pessimism that was cast over the entire scheme by opponents of the Government and by those with a vested interest in any change to the status quo, the Malaysian-built Proton Saga car has succeeded in penetrating the markets of the United Kingdom and South-East Asia as well as being one of the most popular small cars in Malaysia. Early criticism has given way to total acceptance and the former critics are now even trying to claim credit for the scheme for themselves. The proof of the car's success is the recent increase in manning levels in the factory, a jump to a two-shift production schedule so as to fulfil the factory's planned output of 80,000 cars per year, and a demand for the car in Malaysia and in Europe which at present exceeds supply.

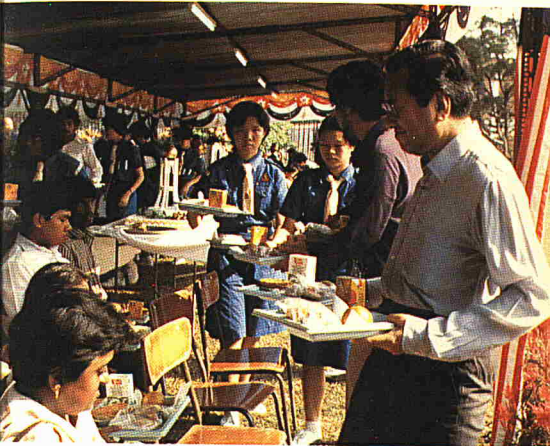
Malaysia's engineering capability will be upgraded slowly but surely. The Government foresees taking advantage of lower overall labour costs together with the skills of Malaysian workers to make it possible to advance into numerous manufacturing industries where raw materials are available locally. Eventually, the administration plans to import raw materials and use the lower production costs in Malaysia to add value and to re-export. According to the Prime Minister, the rise in the value of the Yen has demonstrated the



This new Boeing 747-300 Combi aircraft is used by Malaysian Airlines for its Trans-Pacific flights. It cost \$115 million, carries 293 passengers, and flies in the blue and red livery that is becoming well-known at international airports around the world. (*New Straits Times*)

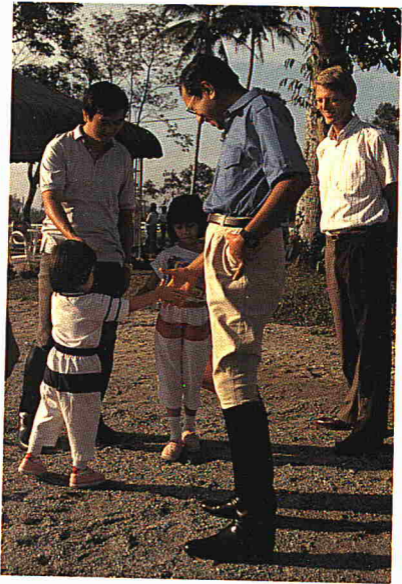
feasibility of value-added processing of imported raw or semi-finished material, and he sees a great future for his country in manufacturing for export – an almost complete turn-around from the colonial years.

Dr. Mahathir is well aware of the potential problems that could be caused by a rising birth rate considered necessary to ensure an adequate work force in the face of the increasing number of elderly people and the rising costs of educating the swelling population to meet the



Hari Raya is traditionally a happy time when Muslims celebrate the end of the fasting month of Ramadan. It is customary in Malaysia to give "Open House" parties, and the Prime Minister is famous for his receptions. This one, in 1985, was for handicapped children, and the Prime Minister and his wife made certain that all the visitors had a truly enjoyable afternoon. (*New Straits Times*)

demands of new technology. In a similar vein, in this age of increasing robot technology, all the new citizens must be able to find jobs which will be rewarding and fulfilling rather than merely ensuring them a weekly wage in place of a simple state handout. Advances in



Malaysians are traditionally a very polite people, and believe that it is never too early to instill in young people the habit of good manners. Here Dr. Mahathir shakes hands with a young admirer after his Sunday morning ride, at an equestrian centre near Kuala Lumpur. (*Robin Adshead*)



Malaysia is unique in having a monarchy that is elected from the traditional Malay Rulers, each taking his turn to serve as King for a five year period. This was the colourful scene in Kuala Lumpur when the new Yang DiPertuan Agong (King) Sultan Azlan Shah arrived for his oath-taking ceremony. His Majesty was met at the airport by the Prime Minister. (*New Straits Times*)



Dr. Mahathir has made a hobby of cooking, and often makes meals for his family at home. Here however, his talents were on public display, when he demonstrated how to prepare Malaysian noodles at a cookery contest in Terengganu in 1988. The Prime Minister won the contest, and then donated the prize to charity. (*New Straits Times*)

technology will bring the workers a vast increase in leisure time, which must be constructively channelled to the nation's benefit if Malaysia is to avoid the enforced idleness that would be damaging to the

workers' morale and the country's image.

With prosperity comes a tendency to forget the struggles of the past, and to take for granted the comforts of modern life. In the process of getting as a matter of course what their parents had to fight for, the young people of the future may become less appreciative and less responsible in their easier and less challenging lives. It will take further education, with an emphasis on the country's history, to keep the struggles of the past alive in the memories of the young, so that they will learn how hard it was at first for their country to succeed and will appreciate the efforts of those who have, by prolonged toil, made it what it is today.

In the course of his political career, Dr. Mahathir has seen some of his colleagues succumb to the pressures of politics and their work in Government. Others have opposed him and been voted down. He sees all this as proof that Malaysian democracy works and is pragmatic about the possibility that former opponents – even some who once criticised and worked against his Government – may at some stage be reinstated. He believes firmly in the ability of the people to make a fair judgement on his and his Government's actions and to vote accordingly. He is fully aware that he cannot ignore the will of the majority, and says that if the people want the former leaders who turned against him, then the people will in due course vote them back into power, where they will find a place in the party, and even in the Government.

Such a view of his opponents is completely in line with his strongly-held beliefs in tolerance and fair play. These are values he learnt early on, during his school years and from the teaching of his father. He brings these feelings of fair play to his political life, to assist in the governing of a multi-racial community and states his view of tolerance forcibly:

“Tolerance does not mean giving in all the way. It means not having gut reaction to every provocation or deed that is

manifestly not right, but to examine coolly every aspect of the affair, especially the other side's views, in order to arrive at a fair conclusion. The conclusion should then influence the action that is to be taken.

"Fair play involves looking at things from the other side as well as your own with as much objectivity as possible. The most difficult thing is to conclude that one is wrong and that there is something in what the other side is saying. But fair play must involve the courage to admit one is wrong.

"In multi-racial Malaysia, tolerance and fair play have helped avoid the kind of open and physical discord that happens in many other multi-racial societies. In 1969 the topmost Malay leader, convinced that it was easier to manipulate his own race than the others, made the mistake of disregarding the rumblings of discontent among his own people. The result was racial riot that cost hundreds of lives. Since then, Malaysian leaders have had their ears to the ground and take seriously signs of discontent from any quarter.

"Emotions are not easily countered by reason. It is important to recognise racial problems early, when emotions are still mild and can respond to reason. A degree of firmness must go along with being reasonable.

"All in all, managing a multi-racial nation is tricky. Malaysia discovered early on that all races must be involved in Government but without losing their racial identities. Thus while parties are racially based, a coalition of racial parties ruling the country ensures that Government is not biased in favour of any particular race. The system of coalition of racial parties is what has helped Malaysia avoid the kind of open racial conflict found in many multi-racial countries."

That there are threats to Malaysian's political stability is a constant cause of watchfulness and alertness on the part of Dr. Mahathir's Administration. Although the nations surrounding Malaysia have largely eradicated the threat of communist subversion, it is possible that the flames of such a threat could blaze up again, if only because of external events beyond Malaysia's control. Large-scale insurgency could be



Malaysia is finding new methods of feeding her people, and Dr. Mahathir takes a keen personal interest in all these schemes, which help to increase the nation's self-sufficiency. He is seen here being shown round a fish farm where prawns and shrimp are raised both for the home market and for export. (*New Straits Times*)

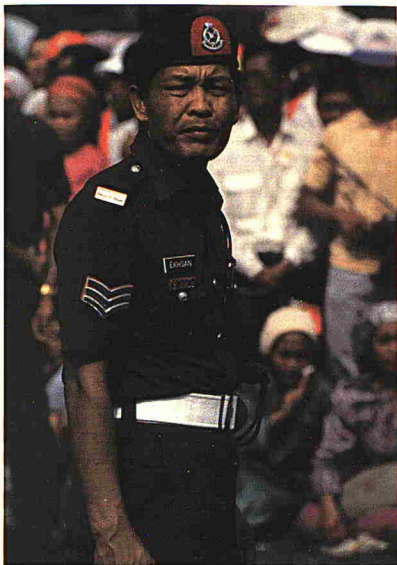
countered by Malaysia's armed forces, already so experienced in such fighting, and who would be readily supported by Commonwealth troops from Australia and New Zealand under current arrangements. Smaller-



Weather can sometimes be spectacular in Malaysia. This was a highly theatrical nighttime storm over the Ampang valley, near Kuala Lumpur. Dr. Mahathir, a veteran of the Malaysian political climate, is confident that there are now no foreseeable storms that Malaysia cannot weather. (*Robin Adshead*)

scale subversion is kept under control by the police, who are well organised to prevent any agitation that might undermine stability. Recent changes to the Internal Security Act have been designed to strengthen the hand of the police in these matters and to prevent any recourse to legal action that might foil the Government's purpose in nipping a potentially dangerous situation in the bud.

These and other security measures do much to reassure the foreign investors who are so necessary to Malaysia's economic growth. Although the day will assuredly come when the Malaysian bases of overseas investing companies will all be managed by Malaysians, Dr. Mahathir considers that expatriate



In the light of Malaysia's history of insurgency, the security forces are experienced, tough and watchful. This bemedalled police officer shows all these characteristics as he surveys the crowds at a political rally. Such alertness is as reassuring to ordinary Malaysians as it is to foreign investors who are helping the nation's economic growth. *(Robin Adshead)*

managers of foreign firms are still vital to progress. He says that Malaysians have no anti-foreign feelings as found in some countries and that they must not be shy about learning from foreign experts. "Expatriates have always been a part of the local scene. We are not worried about them as long as they don't interfere in our affairs," he says. Except when they obviously obstruct Malaysians from getting employment, he will not, he declares, prevent expatriates from coming to Malaysia, and agrees that certain top executive posts in foreign-owned enterprises will continue to be filled by expatriates in order to look after their own investments.

Looking ahead, the prospects for Malaysia's future are fair indeed. In his address to the Dewan Rakyat at the end of June 1989, Dr. Mahathir summed up the mid-term review of the Fifth Malaysian Plan covering the years 1986-1990, forecasting that the overall growth in the economy would be 5.8 per cent, an improvement of 0.8 per cent on the original forecast figures. He was able to point out that Malaysia had done very well in the previous three years despite the recession, from which it successfully emerged with a more resilient economy which can be attributed to the adoption of appropriate and well-structured economic adjustment policies. In particular, he noted that the main source of recovery had been the strong growth of the export sector.

Other improvements include reductions in poverty and unemployment, increases in per capita income and a surplus in the balance of payments. Success in the restructuring of Malaysian society had resulted in a rise in the total percentage of bumiputera participation in the industrial and commercial sectors, as well as an increase in bumiputera ownership of share capital in the corporate sector.

Calling for redoubled effort to achieve all the aims of the Plan which would complete the 20-year Outline Perspective Plan covering the years 1971-1990, Dr. Mahathir stressed the need for more rapid progress in

the private sector to provide the dynamism for accelerated expansion of the economy. On its part, he said, the Government would make fuller efforts to reduce the size of the public sector and its participation in commercial and industrial activities.

"Our success," he continued, "will provide a strong platform from which to launch the nation into the development decade of the 1990s with the determination to make Malaysia a better place for our present and succeeding generations."

The future of those generations is very much in the hands of the Prime Minister, who has no current plans to step down from his position of overseeing Malaysia's growth. The children of the Malaysia of tomorrow will read about Dr. Mahathir and will wonder, perhaps, what it was like to know and to work for such a man. The people in the best position to comment are the members of Dr. Mahathir's Cabinet, who work with him for the prosperity of Malaysia. Even Datuk Musa Hitam, his former Deputy Prime Minister who resigned after four years because of differences of opinion, has a high regard for the Prime Minister and for his ambitions for Malaysia. Datuk Musa says now that Dr. Mahathir chose him to be his Deputy because they had been so close politically for many years, sharing much of the same background in student politics, and having a common perception of what politics is all about and how the country would have to be administered.

"I consider myself to have been very close to him, when I was Minister of Education," says Datuk Musa. "I spent a lot of time with him, discussing the state of affairs in the country, and I spent a lot of time with him analysing critically the overall administration of the country, the politics, the economic and social development of Malaysia as a whole.

"The four years of my working experience with Dr. Mahathir were very pleasant, because we had a very relaxed relationship. I claim maybe this was the first



Datuk Musa Hitam was Dr. Mahathir's Deputy for four years, and still has a high regard for the Premier and his ambitions for the country. The close relationship between the Premier and his Deputy is evident here in this 1984 photograph taken at the Prime Minister's "Open House", when Datuk Musa Hitam was welcomed on arrival by Dr. Mahathir and Datin Seri Dr. Siti Hasmah. (*New Straits Times*)

time in the history of the country's political structure whereby the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister were really close enough to be able to share so many things, almost everything that covered the administration of the country. I could have access to the Prime Minister at any time of day or night. I had

practically a 'hot line' with him. Any time I wanted him on the 'phone, he was there - that is the sort of relationship we had. I learnt a lot during the course of my Deputy Premiership with the Prime Minister, in the sense that he gave me the confidence in being, to begin with, the Acting Prime Minister of the Administration, many times, each time when he was out of the country.

"To give such responsibility to your Deputy in your absence, and then to appoint him as Acting Prime Minister is literally to give away the country to the Deputy, to look after the country in his absence. And then by giving me a great deal of responsibility to deal with many things from politics to education, to matters related to security, to development, to dealing with social matters.

"I think that by giving me these responsibilities, and assigning me to do certain jobs as a result of our very close discussions in the course of the four years, I learnt a lot. I had to do the jobs myself, and I did, as assigned by him. So, all in all, I would consider my working relationship with him to be very pleasant and very relaxed indeed.

"I will remember him as a man of undoubted sincerity, insofar as wanting to see Malaysia go ahead, or rather to forge ahead. I have no doubt about his sincerity. He means it, he means well, he wants Malaysia to be ahead, and along with the sincerity is the determination and the stubbornness of wanting to get on with it - stubbornness in wanting to see that it is pushed ahead. He does not want Malaysia just to forge ahead, he wants to push Malaysia ahead. I will remember him as a man who has a vision to make Malaysia at least a Newly Industrialised Country, emulating the examples of Japan and Korea, and latterly Singapore. As the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia, I think he is so determined to be successful that he has even become obsessed with the idea that Malaysia must be there.



On a hill above Kuala Lumpur, this imposing modern building houses the Prime Minister's Office. This is the seat of power, but the Prime Minister still insists on "clocking-on", just like all his civil servants. (*Robin Adshead*)

"He naturally becomes controversial. He has created a lot of debate, a lot of doubt, and of course naturally so. I think anything new in any society always makes people afraid of it, and in the process there are doubts and debate. He has made those who are aware in society divided in their viewpoints as to his administration. We cannot really judge him right now, because his ambitions and his vision of Malaysia require so much time that he might need to stay much longer in order to ensure that what he goes for would be achieved.

"I think we will all remember Dr. Mahathir as the man who has imposed the changes. If you want Malaysia to be part of the modern world, the dynamic world, whatever changes had to come had to be imposed from the top. I think Dr. Mahathir has contributed a lot in the sense of imposing changes on the Malays and jolting them into awareness of the necessity to change in order to adapt to the modern world. I think that without that, the Malays would not

move. They would take their time. There is a very cryptic way the Malays describe themselves in the song 'Lenggang' of which we are all very fond. 'Lenggang' means just to stroll along very slowly, just moving along, and I think that this is how things would have happened without the process of jolting from the top.

"Dr. Mahathir is a very blunt and frank person. Malaysians have not been used to bluntness, ever before. Now we have a leader who is quite blunt and who tells you off whenever he feels like it. You don't know whether in the end it is going to be good or bad – we will have to leave it to history. He is the first leader who is blunt and who does not mince words. It sounds very unpleasant to Malaysians generally and especially to Malays, but maybe it will work in the long run – I will give him the benefit of the doubt.

"I have said he is sincere in his wish to make Malaysia great, and he is frank about it. He will tell off people who try to tell him off, if he thinks they are on the wrong premise. He told off the British, right to their faces. He is telling off the Western world right now, for example, if they criticise us about the environment, about cutting down our forests. He says: 'What about you guys? You have done it too. You should now replant your forests, and demolish your buildings' – and that is quite frank.

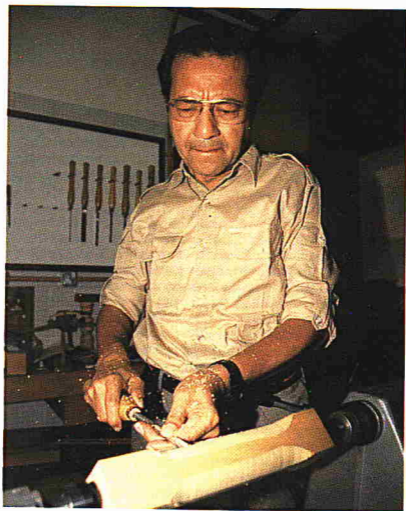
"Dr. Mahathir involved the country in rapid fire shots, to put it in military terminology. There was the 'Look East' policy, the clocking-in, the name tags – all symbolic things. He is going for heavy industry. He has re-oriented Malaysian society towards something new that they had never been used to. In the end, I think we will benefit from it, even if we get angry about being prodded. When you get prodded, you are angry, but you have to move on in one direction, and under prodding you get there faster. If you have to run instead of strolling, you get to your destination much faster, and you are much fitter when you get there – you realise that you are a much more healthy person and you achieve your target.

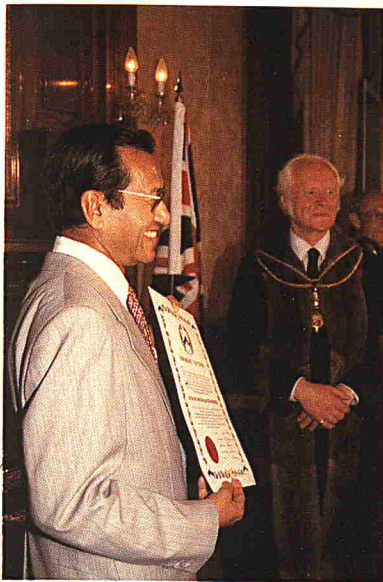
"I imagine that Malaysians will remember Dr. Mahathir's projects visually. In these terms, they have a sense of pride in something they can see, such as the Malaysian car. It is no secret that I was critical of the Malaysian car and how it got started, but you know that when Malaysians look at that car, they say: 'Ah, that is the

Mahathir of Malaysia

Proton Saga – that was Dr. Mahathir who launched it.' It is literally Dr. Mahathir's car. I think the people will remember that the project was his. It would be symbolic of his determination to see Malaysia going ahead, because the car itself is symbolic of the industrialisation of Malaysia.

"I have had my differences with him, basically on the economic development of the country. Even that being so, I would wish him my very best, and his ambitions if they can be achieved will be good for Malaysia."





In spite of his heavy workload, Dr. Mahathir makes time for relaxation, and for his hobbies. Woodwork has always been a favourite occupation (*left*), and his skill has won him international recognition in the form of an award in 1989 from the Worshipful Company of Carpenters in London (*above*).
(Robin Adshead)

The lasting impressions he makes on his closest colleagues and Cabinet Ministers are summed up by the observations of Datuk Leo Moggie, recently appointed Minister of Works after some time as Minister of Energy, Post and Telecommunications.

"I first met Dr. Mahathir in 1977. I had read his book, *The Malay Dilemma* and had a preconceived image of him as a very formidable and dominating figure. Meeting him for the first time, however, one forms a different impression of him. He doesn't say much except in answer to direct questions and is soft-spoken and quite diffident. One feels his presence in a quiet and somewhat unnerving sort of way.

"He comes across as being essentially a very shy person, but he has a very sharp intellect and is very fast in making decisions. Despite his shyness, he can be very blunt and persistent – he impresses one as a man with a mission. He is a workaholic, and expects his Cabinet members to exemplify this belief in the absolute necessity for hard work. He is attracted to new ideas, and can conversely be impatient with the typical bureaucratic reluctance to question established ways of doing things. I suspect this is why the civil service is sometimes in awe of him.

"He has definite views on many things, but he will let you argue your case. Once a decision is made, however, he expects it to be adhered to. Any personal reservations should be kept quietly to oneself, and I think this is how it should be, otherwise it would be impossible to have orderly government. I find no difficulty in working in Dr. Mahathir's Cabinet.

"I once went to see him, quite early on in my association with him, on some matters concerning my home State of Sarawak. During the course of the conversation he mentioned that sometimes one has to act first and explain later. Over the years I have come to realise how true this can be, particularly in public life. Leadership must involve initiation of direction of policy, and

A View of the Future



Dr. Mahathir leads by example. He listens to what people have to say, checks and examines all sides of the issue, and then goes ahead and gets the job done. Even in this anti-litter campaign, he never hesitated to give a personal lead to make Malaysia a cleaner place. (*New Straits Times*)

the ability to have that policy legitimised.

"Dr. Mahathir's little notebook is a legend among members of the Cabinet. His critics use this as an example of what they feel to be Dr. Mahathir's over-involvement in details of administration. However, he is totally accessible, and many people come and see him. He goes around quite informally at times - driving, or visiting shopping complexes - in addition to his official visits round the country and abroad. He listens to what people say, and makes his own observations. These are then brought to the attention of the various Ministers to check and examine - grouses against red tape, conditions of public facilities, street lights that are not working, new ideas that strike him as he travels abroad. These jottings represent his total commitment to his work. I do not think that any Ministers have totally escaped these jottings in his notebook.

"As a person, he is quite sensitive. He is a very dedicated man, but behind the perfectionist in him, he is in fact very soft-hearted and pragmatic. He is also a very shrewd politician with a very good sense of timing. He uses politics to achieve what he considers as his mission to improve the conditions of life of the ordinary people, and he can be very calculating in that sense."

One noticeable distinction between Dr. Mahathir and his predecessors, says Datuk Leo, is his innovativeness. "He has a questioning mind, and compared to him, his predecessors were very much tied to tradition. This innovativeness is his most outstanding attribute. One example is the way he tries to modernise the Malay perception of his role in society. Why should the Malays remain merely peasant farmers? They should aspire to be professionals and businessmen. Achievement is not given on a silver platter, however. It has to be worked for, and for this reason he cites the example of the Japanese, the South Koreans and the Taiwanese. The 'Look East' policy is in fact very much concerned with this question of the ethics of hard work, and not the

A View of the Future



The Education Minister, Encik Anwar Ibrahim, was a student leader when he and the Prime Minister first met. His own experience in education helps him when making official visits to State schools such as this one in Damansara Utama. (*New Straits Times*)

question of favouring the Japanese or the Koreans."

Another Cabinet Minister, Encik Anwar Ibrahim, the current Minister of Education, has known him since 1969, when Anwar was a student leader at the University of Malaya. Dr. Mahathir gave Anwar some chapters of *The Malay Dilemma* to read and to circulate among the student leaders in the country. Dr. Mahathir had just been expelled from UMNO for speaking out against Tunku Abdul Rahman, and the Malay students were generally against the Tunku after the May 1969 race riots. This brought the students and Dr. Mahathir together and gave the future Prime Minister access to students around the country.

Encik Anwar records his impressions of Dr. Mahathir. "As a student," he says, "I looked upon Dr. Mahathir as a man of principle. He stood by his word, said what he meant and was full of ideas. We saw him as the alternative to the British-oriented leadership of the Tunku."

His impressions now have not altered much. "He is tireless, and always in a hurry. Sometimes he is too far in front for his own Cabinet to follow. But this is his nature. It's taxing, but it spurs us to move on and at a high speed. I think he is a personality very much misunderstood by the public. Contrary to his public image as being very tough and a difficult man to deal with, he is extremely sympathetic and a good listener."

To work for the Prime Minister, says Anwar, one has to be unorthodox, even bold. "Many people think Dr. Mahathir is intolerant, stubborn and dictatorial. The weak and submissive may feel that way. After all, he knows more about things than most of his ministers. He has a powerful memory. His arguments are always backed by facts and figures. To win him over or make him see your point of view, you have to be equally convincing. You have to prove your ideas will work. You must be prepared to argue with him. He does get angry sometimes. But that is the risk you must be prepared to take. In reality he does not meddle with the work of his

A View of the Future

ministers – on the contrary, he gives them considerable freedom. Working for him is a pleasure. But if you promise him something, you had better have it done.”

He describes his relationship with the Prime Minister as being close, although Anwar is extremely respectful to Dr. Mahathir as a leader and as an older person. He

As a prominent Third World leader, Dr. Mahathir is welcomed everywhere, both East and West. In 1988, he paid an official visit to Russia, where he was shown round Star City by a Russian cosmonaut. With him in this historic photograph are other members of his party; the Malaysians, from the left, are the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister Datuk Abu Hassan bin Haji Omar, the Minister of Industry Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and the Minister of Works Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu. (*Prime Minister's Office*)



sees him as being sober and quite aloof, although, he says, Cabinet meetings need not necessarily be dull.

As a politician, Anwar regards Dr. Mahathir as being "shrewd and resilient. Humane, predictable, calculative, but he can pull off many surprises." Dr. Mahathir differs from his predecessors in being educated locally and in being trained as a doctor rather than a lawyer. Many feel that this is the great intellectual divide that separates him from the three previous Prime Ministers. In Anwar's view however, the difference is in Dr. Mahathir's outlook and thinking. "Dr. Mahathir believes that the full potential of Malaysia as a maturing independent nation can be fully realised only if we are prepared to make changes to our thinking, the way we do things and the way we manage our economy. He has undertaken some of the most unpopular and bold decisions to change the course of the economy. Most people now agree that he has made the right decisions."

Anwar believes the Prime Minister will be remembered by Malaysians for his vision and courage. "Most people will remember him as a controversial politician. But I think he should be credited and remembered for his vision - he makes us think of the future. It is also true that his thinking is a little ahead of his time. In international affairs, what makes the difference is his commitment. I think many world leaders acknowledge his independent thinking on many issues - perhaps he is one of the most articulate leaders of the Third World."

Future Malaysians will also be able to remember Dr. Mahathir by his record of achievement in office. Datuk Leo Moggie sums up the enduring success of the Prime Minister's policies:

"Among the various policies associated with Dr. Mahathir, I think three will have a particularly lasting effect upon Malaysia.

"Firstly, the New Economic Policy itself, especially with regard to eliminating the identification of



The Prime Minister carries out several overseas visits every year to promote Malaysia's interests. He is seen here explaining Malaysia's attractive investment policies to bankers in London.

Among the Bank Negara officials and distinguished guests is the Finance Minister, Datuk Paduka Daim Zainuddin (to the right of Datin Seri Dr. Siti Hasmah, in picture). The Minister, who is also the Treasurer of UMNO, is the head of the formidable financial team that is spearheading the Prime Minister's aggressive economic programme. (*Robin Adshead*)

economic function along racial lines. The New Economic Policy was formulated in 1970, but it echoes many of the ideas of *The Malay Dilemma*. Political independence has little meaning unless it is accompanied by economic independence.

"Secondly, the structural changes in the Malaysian

economy, in two aspects. One is the shift from an agricultural to an industrial base. The Proton Saga is an important symbol of that structural change. The other is the policy of privatisation, and 'Malaysia Incorporated', in the broader sense of reducing the direct role of Government in business, and the central role of the private sector in the economy. The public and the private sectors must play a co-operative role in building up the national economy. Against the background of Malaysian society of the mid-80s, this is a revolutionary concept.

"Thirdly, the concept of hard work as being fundamental to progress. This is essentially what the 'Look East' policy is all about. Malaysia is rich in natural resources. There are no natural catastrophes such as typhoons or earthquakes - only some occasional minor floods. Life in general has been relatively easy, and it is equally easy to assume that the future will continue to be bright. Dr. Mahathir sees the necessity for shaking Malaysian minds out of that mental euphoria, however. Yes, it is possible to have that continuing well-being. But it has to be worked for. One can only enjoy what one is prepared to work for."

If Malaysians will remember Dr. Mahathir for his direction of policies that have irreversibly altered their lives for the better, the world will remember him for his uncompromising stand against drug abuse and his recognition of the need for strong international action against drugs. Many world leaders share Dr. Mahathir's concern with regard to this growing menace, but are perhaps unable to take a strong public stand in the same way as he has done because of internal political restraints. In this way, Dr. Mahathir has earned the respect of the entire world.

He will also be remembered by Third World countries for his leadership in sponsoring the South-South Commission and in stressing the need for Third World nations to band together and co-operate to ensure their



The friendly rapport Dr. Mahathir enjoys with Britain's Prime Minister Mrs Margaret Thatcher is evident in this picture showing both leaders taking a photo call on the steps of No. 10 Downing Street. (*Prime Minister's Office*)

survival in the face of Western domination of trade and international power.

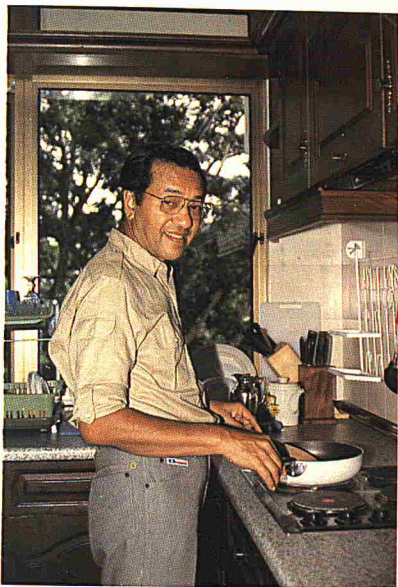
He is highly regarded throughout the world as an international statesman and has made a lasting impression upon other world leaders. In a recent tribute to Dr. Mahathir, the British Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Mrs Margaret Thatcher MP, said:

"Until quite recently, Malaysia was known as a source of primary products for the developed world, and its economy was at the mercy of commodity markets. Dr. Mahathir and his Government have recognised the need to broaden the base of the economy and the country is now rapidly emerging as a significant industrial producer, up to half her exports being manufactures. This much healthier position is reflected in increasing per capita income and a rapidly developing modern, social and economic infrastructure. A Malaysian car, the Proton Saga, has recently been introduced into world markets and is now available in Britain. This is a project with which Dr. Mahathir has been closely identified, and symbolises the more sophisticated and advanced Malaysia for which he has worked.

"Dr. Mahathir has made his and Malaysia's voice heard in the world. He has made a strong personal mark as a crusader against drug abuse, taking the Chair at the Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Vienna in June 1987. I know that the drug problem which afflicts Malaysia and the world has always been a major concern to him and to Datin Seri Dr. Siti Hasmah.

"Under Dr. Mahathir, Malaysia has in the last two or three years come to occupy a prominent position on the world stage, a position emphasised by its election to the United Nations Security Council at the end of 1988. Malaysia also took the Chair at the International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees in Geneva on 13 and 14 June this year (1989), and, of course, is host for the 1989 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. In short, under Dr. Mahathir's leadership, Malaysia has been ready to give a lead over a very wide range of world issues and this has been of enormous benefit to the country's reputation and standing.

"I have known Dr. Mahathir for a number of years. He and I share certain beliefs about encouraging private enterprise and endeavour, about letting people build and keep their own futures, about choice and about free trade. He and I have met each other many times, and have always found our meetings immensely valuable. Indeed I hope that I am not presuming in describing him as a friend, whose counsel I have found invaluable, as well as a very skilful and tough negotiator for Malaysia's interests. Ours is a personal relationship which I value very highly indeed."



Dr. Mahathir enjoys cooking as a means of relaxation, although he often belittles his own skills. He takes a keen interest in interior design and decoration too, but Dr. Siti-Hasmah insists that the layout of the kitchen is decided only by her. (*Robin Adshead*)

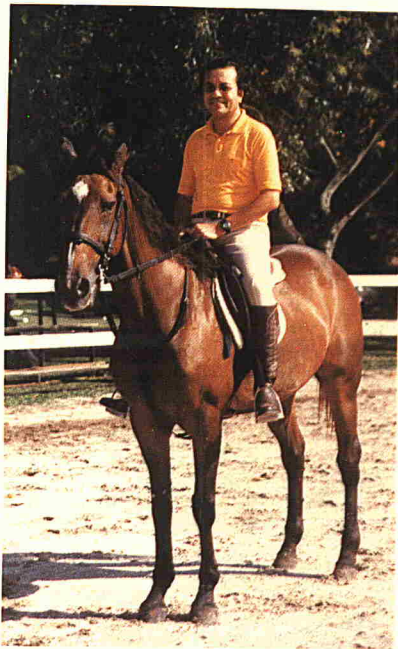
Mahathir of Malaysia

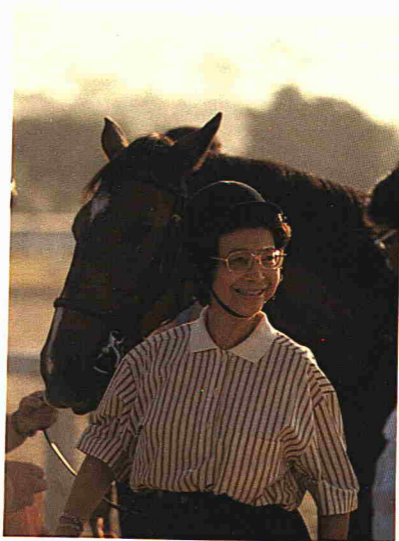
When he does finally retire, he plans to retire fully. He has no intention of becoming a 'power behind the throne' to influence the incoming Prime Ministers, but says instead that he will keep busy by working on a variety of projects, such as writing on a number of topics. It is difficult to conceive of the Prime Minister allowing even a single second of his free moments to pass unfilled, and he looks forward to being able to spend more time with his wife and family. It is said that behind every successful man, there stands a good woman, but Dr. Mahathir categorically refutes this in his case, paying his own tribute to Datin Seri Dr. Siti Hasmah by saying: "There has never been a good woman standing behind me. She has always stood right at my side."

The Mahathirs are a devoted couple, and travel together as often as possible. This picture, taken after the vast UMNO rally in Johore Bahru in 1989, shows the Prime Minister and his wife in a cheerful mood in spite of the long afternoon's ceremonial, and proves the Prime Minister's tribute to Dr. Siti Hasmah who, he says "has always stood right at my side". (*Robin Adshead*)



A View of the Future





Ever since he was presented with two horses by the late President of Pakistan, General Zia al-Huq, Dr. Mahathir has been a keen horseman (*page 179*). Even after his heart bypass surgery in early 1989, the Prime Minister was back in the saddle as soon as his doctors would allow it. Now he rides as often as his schedule permits, and is supported in this hobby by Dr. Siti Hasmah, herself a keen rider (*above*). (*Prime Minister's Office, and Robin Adshead*)

His wife is adamant that she would like him to enjoy a peaceful retirement after the long years of political pressure, so that he can write his memoirs and do all the things he enjoys most – cooking, woodworking, and riding. They have bought a plot of land on a new estate in the countryside outside Kuala Lumpur and are building a modest but comfortable house, high on a hill, with spectacular views all around, from the mountains of the central range down to the coastal plains. Freed from the tensions of the political world, Dr. Mahathir will be able to enjoy the rewards of his hard work and dedication to duty that he has so well earned. Malaysians of all ages will wish him well in his retirement, when that day finally arrives. But first, he has more work to do for his country, and for all Malaysians.

Asked how he would like to be remembered in later years, he replied: "As a person who cares for the nation and the people."

Malaysia will have other Prime Ministers, who will no doubt leave their own marks upon the progress of the country. Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad will, however, always be honoured and remembered for the strength of his convictions that all Malaysians have the right to share equally in the opportunities inherent in their own country, so that they may stand with dignity and pride among the peoples of the world.



The Prime Minister is seen here opening the London branch of the Bank Negara. His constant advice to Malaysians to forge ahead in an era of high technology has earned him the reputation of "father of Modern Malaysia." (*Robin Adshead*);

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Y.A.B. Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad

	Awards	Title	State	Year
DK1 (Peringkat Yang Pertama)	Darjah Kerabat Johor Yang Amat Dihormati	—	Johor	1989
DUK	Darjah Utama Kedah	—	Kedah	1988
SSDK	Seri Setia DiRaja Kedah	Dato' Seri	Kedah	1977
SSAP	Seri Sultan Ahmad Shah Peringkat Pertama	Dato' Seri	Pahang	1977
SPMS	Seri Paduka Mahkota Selangor	Dato'	Selangor	1978
SPMJ	Seri Paduka Mahkota Johor	Dato'	Johor	1979
DP (Sarawak)	Datuk Patinggi Bintang Kenyalang	Dato Patinggi	Sarawak	1980
DUPN	Darjah Utama Pangkuan Negeri	Datuk	Pulau Pinang	1981
SPNS	Darjah Seri Paduka Negeri Sembilan	Dato' Seri Utama	Negeri Sembilan	1981
SPDK	Seri Panglima Darjah Kinabalu	Datuk	Sabah	1981
SPCM	Darjah Seri Paduka Chura Si Manja Kini	Dato' Seri	Perak	1981
SSMT	Seri Setia Sultan Mahmud Terengganu Peringkat Pertama	Dato' Seri	Terengganu	1982
DUNM	Darjah Utama Negeri Melaka	Datuk Seri Utama	Melaka	1982
PIS	Pingat Ibrahim Sultan	—	Johor	1985

24 JAN. 1990