

'Datuk Hussein didn't sound me out on new post'

# I WILL DO MY BEST: I WON'T HESITATE TO SPEAK OUT: NEW DEPUTY P.M. MAHATHIR

**QUOTE**

IT'S a surprise. Datuk Hussein did not even give me an indication that I may be the new Deputy Prime Minister.... Whatever my duties, I will perform to the best of my ability... I will assist the Prime Minister in the best way

From the album — Dr. Mahathir with his family. From left Mokzani, Mukhriz, Dr. Hasmah, Ayesha and Mirzan (foreground).

MM - 6 MAR 1976  
R. MAHATHIR

**D** Mohamed was a surprised man

yesterday.

He did not have a clue until Datuk Hussein Onn's announcement that he would be the new Deputy Prime Minister.

"It's a surprise. Datuk Hussein did not even give me an indication that I may be the new Deputy Prime Minister," Dr. Mahathir said here last night.

## HEAVY BURDEN

He said: "Datuk Hussein called Encik Ghafar Baba, Tengku Tan Sri Razaleigh Hamzah and me (all three Umno vice-presidents) recently, but he only asked us our views on a Cabinet reshuffle."

The Prime Minister did not tell them anything else, he said. Dr. Mahathir accepts his new duties as "one of the responsi-

bilities of office."

He pledged to do his "level best" in fulfilling his new duties although this could mean "a heavy burden."

"Whatever duties are given to me, I will perform to the best of my ability.

"I do not quite know what is fully required of me, but I will assist the Prime Minister in the best way I can," he said.

He said he had no specific programme in mind relating to the affairs of the country. "It is much too early to speak of anything definite at this stage.

"But I have my own opinions and ideas for the good of the country. I will not hesitate to express my opinions."

He said the problems of education would continue to be amongst the uppermost things in his mind and he considered the Education portfolio, which he is retaining an important one.

On the Cabinet reshuffle, Dr. Mahathir said Encik Ghafar Baba had for a very long time wanted to resign. In fact, he

had asked the late Tun Abdul Razak that he be exempted from contesting the 1974 election.

He wanted a rest. He would continue to serve the people although no longer in the Cabinet, Dr. Mahathir said.

On Tengku Razaleigh's appointment as Finance Minister, he said it would have been so had Tun Razak been alive.

## NO RIFT CAUSED

He said that his appointment as Deputy Prime Minister had not caused any rift in Umno.

Dr. Mahathir, here on a two-day visit, returns to Kuala Lumpur on Sunday.

Meanwhile, women in Kuala Lumpur praised Datuk Hussein for appointing a woman as parliamentary secretary.

Datuk Hussein had taken a positive step in appointing Senator Rafidah Azli, they said. The appointment also reflected the faith the Prime Minister had in women, they added.

By MILLICENT DANKER:

Segamat, Saturday