

FIRST 100 DAYS OF THE MAHATHIR ERA

TODAY is Budget Day. It is also the 100th day of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as Prime Minister.

And it has been an eventful 100 days for the Mahathir Administration, unlike any other in the country's history, except perhaps for the heady days of Merdeka in 1957.

The new spirit inbued by the Prime Minister and his deputy, Datuk Musa Hitam, has left in its wake controversy, an image of a fast-moving and action-oriented administration and a public scrambling to catch up with the pace set by the two leaders.

And while the general consensus seems to be that the administration is doing a good job, there has also been worry that the two top leaders might be burning themselves out.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, asked that his administration be given a year before any judgment is passed, and apparently the public is willing to give him the time he has asked for.

The public rapping of civil servants and the exhortations to them to buck up or face the music have gone down well with the public.

And the move to clean up the Government, the stepping-up of the fight against corruption and the introduction of the profit-oriented philosophy in government agencies which have business dealings together with the shutting down of loss-making ventures have got the public rooting for the administration.

to foreign affairs as well.

On Aug. 10, Datuk Musa alerted everyone to his new role as trouble-shooter when he began a three-day official visit to Johore — and ordered that two subsidiaries of the Johore Tenggara Development Authority (Kejora) be shut down for making huge losses.

He also publicly declared that there seemed to be confusion among top civil servants as to the exact role of specific government agencies and there seemed to be no co-ordination among them.

Three days later, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir left for Jakarta for a meeting with President Suharto and

again the Prime Minister broke with tradition as previously the first stop of Malaysian Prime Ministers in their familiarisation tour of Asean was normally Bangkok.

A few days later came the announcement by Datuk Musa that the Prime Minister had directed all

curities Industries Act to check manipulation of the Stock Exchange.

Prices had tumbled on the stock market and the Prime Minister blamed it on short-sellers out to make huge profits and said the Government had a suspicion who they were.

He also told the same Press conference that he would not attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting to be held in Melbourne at the end of September and Foreign Minister Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie would attend on his behalf.

Then he said that he would leave the next day for a two-week holiday. On Sept. 3, he left for Spain and Portugal for his vacation.

Four days later, Permodalan Nasional Berhad launched a successful "dawn raid" in the London Stock Exchange and gained majority control of Guthrie Corporation in just three hours — a move that sent shockwaves through the British financial establishment.

PNB paid out \$317 mil-

tics and Royalty and Haji Abdul Rahim later left for Mecca to perform the Haj — with no acting Menteri Besar appointed to run the State in his absence.

Umno branches and divisions in Pahang came out openly and backed the embattled Menteri Besar and his position still remains uncertain (Haji Abdul Rahim returned earlier this week and is now in Kuantan. He has said that he would resume duties as Menteri Besar next week.

On Sept. 19, the Prime Minister opened the MCA general assembly with a warning to Barisan Nasional component parties not to disturb the status quo, an apparent reference to the MCA Youth resolution the previous day calling for a second Deputy Prime Minister, from MCA ranks, be appointed.

On Sept. 29, Dunlop Holdings sold Dunlop Estates to Multi-Purpose Holdings Berhad in a surprise move for \$211.14 million, and again the British financial community reacted with horror.

The first hint of the cracking pace to be set by the new Prime Minister came when he announced that he would name his Cabinet on July 18 — just two days after being sworn-in as the head of government.

And in the reshuffle, two Deputy Ministers were promoted to full Ministers (Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Encik Sanusi Junid), four senior Ministers were moved to new portfolios and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah was reappointed Finance Minister.

Five days later, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir chaired his first Cabinet meeting as Prime Minister and announced the revival of the National Action Council and National Economic Council.

On July 30, the new Deputy Premier and Home Minister, Datuk Musa, announced the release of 21 Internal Security Act detainees.

Among those freed were former Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abdullah Ahmad, Partai Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia chairman Kassim Ahmad and two DAP MP's, Chan Kok Kit and Chian Heng Kai.

Datuk Musa also announced that the ban imposed on the sale of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir's controversial book, "The Malay Dilemma," had been lifted — and the book was soon on its way to being a best-seller.

Two days later, former

By N.V. RAMAN

Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Harun Idris was freed from prison following the Federal Territory Pardons Board decision to grant him a remission of sentence on his six-year jail term for forgery and corruption.

Datuk Harun's conviction, however, still stands and he subsequently was granted an exemption by Datuk Musa to hold his office of Umno vice-president (The Societies (Amendment) Act bars convicted people from holding office in societies unless granted an exemption).

After Hari Raya Puasa on Aug. 3, the Prime Minister cracked the whip and civil servants were told to shape up or face the music.

The clock-in system was introduced on a trial basis and civil servants were told to increase productivity and be more efficient.

Six days later, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir received Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang — and told him bluntly that Peking's support for the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) was an obstacle in relations between Malaysia and China.

The blunt language surprised the Chinese Premier and diplomats were also put on notice that the no-nonsense style of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir extended

Cabinet Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Parliamentary secretaries, Mentris Besar, Chief Ministers and senior civil servants to fill in an asset declaration form duly notarised by a Commissioner of Oaths.

On Aug. 22, there was a mild panic when the Prime Minister, in an official visit to Kedah, collapsed while delivering a speech in Ku-

bang Pasu due to fatigue and diarrhoea.

But the Prime Minister, who cancelled all his other engagements, and flew back to Kuala Lumpur, stressed that he had recovered and would still be leaving for Bangkok the next day.

On Aug. 23, he flew to Bangkok to meet Thai Premier Gen Tan Sri Prem Tinsulanonda.

The next day, Datuk Musa, who was on an official visit to Perlis, ordered that two loss-making subsidiaries of the Perlis State Economic Development Corporation be shut down (up to date, a total of 41 SEDC subsidiaries have been ordered to be shut

down due to heavy losses incurred by them).

Datuk Musa has so far also visited Penang, Negri Sembilan and Sarawak.

Just about a week later, on Sept. 2, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir told a Press conference after a Cabinet meeting that the Government would introduce legislation to amend the Se-

lion for the 7,995,000 shares it bought to gain 50.4 per cent equity of Guthrie. (On Wednesday, PNB announced it had bought up 95.3 per cent of Guthrie's shares following its offer to the remaining shareholders).

Just a few days later, the London authorities made amendments to the takeover code to prevent more dawn raids in what Malaysia considered was a direct retaliation to PNB's acquisition of Guthrie.

This move by the British was to have an unexpected fallout in Malaysia later.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir returned home after his holiday in mid-September and reiterated that he would not attend the Commonwealth meeting in Melbourne as he had more important tasks to attend to at home.

The announcement was met with tut-tutting by the foreign diplomatic community and an Australian Broadcasting Corporation station in Queensland, Australia, broadcast a satire implying that the Prime Minister was a wog.

Australian Foreign Minister Tony Street and Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser later apologised to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir for the broadcast and said it was in poor taste.

Then on Sept. 17, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was faced with his first big political test — the controversy over Pahang Menteri Besar Haji Abdul Rahim Bakar.

The issue involved poli-

Multi-Purpose and a bumiputra company, Pegi subsequently set up a joint company which held the Dunlop Estates shares and Pegi's shares in Dunlop Holdings.

On Sept. 30, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir had another hot political potato on his hands when the story broke that Johore Menteri Besar Tan Sri Othman Saat was being replaced by Datuk Musa Hitam as State Umno chief.

Tan Sri Othman said in a statement the following day that he had stepped down as Johore Umno chief but it was clear he had been asked to do so by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir. It meant that the Menteri Besar was coming to the end of his political career.

On Oct. 2, the Prime Minister announced that all tenders and awards to British firms by government agencies must first be cleared by his department — an apparent retaliation to the British attitude following PNB's acquisition of Guthrie.

The British Press reacted, typically, with strong and emotional anti-Malaysian editorials which also turned out to contain errors of fact.

On the night of Oct. 2, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir left for Penang to open the MIC general assembly the next day — by train.

"I want to see for myself the improvements made by Malayan Railway," he said.

Opening the MIC assembly, he reiterated that the status quo stays and

also praised the party for settling its internal problems.

On Oct. 10, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir told reporters in Alor Star that the issue of a second Deputy Prime Minister did not arise. This was after a verbal slanging match between Umno Youth leader Datuk Haji Suhaimi Kamaruddin and MCA Youth chief Datuk Lee Kim Sai on the issue.

On Wednesday, the Prime Minister met an MCA Youth delegation that submitted a memorandum containing the resolutions passed by the Youth wing at its assembly.

And today, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir's 100th day as Prime Minister, Finance Minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah presents the first Budget of the Mahathir Administration.