

Dr Mahathir confident of prospects for nation in 1990s

# Malaysia to maintain high profile

NST 29 DEC 1989

**KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the coronary bypass operation he underwent in January had a very strong psychological effect on him — he is a changed person.**

"If you consider that during the operation your heart actually stopped, technically you died before you recovered. That is an experience which affects everybody.

"From what I gather, anybody who has gone through the operation has gone through a very traumatic experience and it shocks him. Usually he is a changed person," said the Prime Minister when asked if he was a changed person after the operation in an interview with senior newspaper and news agency editors.

"Maybe I'm changed because of that."

When it was pointed out that many people had not considered him a friendly person until after the operation, Dr Mahathir replied with laughter:

"Well, I have been told that I was a very unfriendly person. But even before the operation, I was trying to correct this impression although I think it was unjustified.

"I am normally a very friend-

ly person. But I don't have a very friendly face. I don't smile that often. People tell me that I don't smile. So now I have to smile more often. I have to try and get rid of my preoccupation with serious matters. I will have to reserve my own time for that kind of thing."

In the interview, the Prime Minister spoke on a wide range of subjects, including the political situation in the country, his readiness to continue talks with Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, the economic prospects of the country in the 1990s and deve-

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□ FULL TEXT OF INTERVIEW ON PAGES 6, 7 & 15

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lopments in the Eastern Bloc countries.

But despite the change in outlook, his resolve to take the country to greater heights has not changed. Speaking of the coming decade, the Prime Minister said the potential for progress was tremendous.

He was confident that with the correct attitude, the country's economic growth rate could be accelerated.

Appealing for a more positive attitude among the people, Dr Mahathir said: "It is not enough for the Government to want to do something, it is also necessary that the people place themselves in a position to achieve the target we have set for our-

selves ... and with the potential that we have, I'm quite sure that we can achieve an even greater rate of growth."

Asked if Malaysia would continue to maintain a high profile in international relations, Dr Mahathir said he was for such a policy stance as it had generally benefited the country.

"I have always maintained that of the Asean countries, Malaysia is the least known. Everybody knows Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and even Brunei but Malaysia is sometimes mistaken for some country in Africa.

"Of course for a lot of people whether it is Malawi or Malaysia there is not much difference, so this policy will continue. It has brought us considerable benefit.

"Our slightly higher profile internationally is necessary in order to put across our views. We feel that we can contribute to the arguments to reduce protectionism. We must admit that our approach is aggressive."

On the creation of Bumiputera business community, the Prime Minister said the stress should now be on turning out good Bumiputera managers.

"We even encourage joint ventures between Bumiputeras and non-Bumiputeras, the so-called Ali-Baba. But we want Ali to work and if there is no evidence that Ali is working then we will give the licence to Baba," he said.