

'Little time to implement vision'

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Question: In an interview sometime ago, Datuk Seri lamented about not having enough time (in implementing your ideas or vision) and after 20 years in office, is time still a key issue (in your administration)?

Dr Mahathir: Time has always been an important factor because there is too much work to be done. But I am grateful to be given the opportunity — the opportunity to become the Prime Minister, the opportunity to be directly involved in the nation's development and a little bit of opportunity to help in the development of the Malays.

I am grateful for being given all these opportunities. If I could, I wish to be given more time because I have many more ideas (to be implemented). But I am aware, 20 years is a very long time. There are many views saying that I should give others the opportunity.

Who knows? Others may be better than me. If you remember, when I was chosen (as the Prime Minister), many were doubtful of me...Tun Hussein Onn (Dr Mahathir's predecessor) said to me that he prayed to God that he had made the right choice.

He was himself not convinced. *Alhamdulillah* for having been given the opportunity.

Q: How much more time do you need to fulfil your vision for Malaysia?

Dr Mahathir: Probably another year, probably a decade, probably five decades ... we do not know. But most importantly, I want to ensure the Malays and Malaysia possess a high level of resilience so that we can continue to uphold our independence. We want the Malays and other Bumiputeras to be given the appropriate place.

Q: Many people would remember your 20-year term as Prime Minister, but many forget you were Deputy Prime Minister for five years and served two years as Education Minister. Putting the years together, you have been serving in the Cabinet for 27 years. How do you feel about having served in the Cabinet for such a long time?

Dr Mahathir: I don't feel it as time passes because I'm always busy. I have a lot of work to do. Many people want to see me, there are many problems to be solved ... therefore, I don't have time to think about time ... week after week passes. I feel 27 years is not a long time until I look at my old photographs ... I had a lot of hair in the past, but not anymore now.

Q: How much of your vision has been achieved and what are the major ones?

Dr Mahathir: If we take into account the physical development, it has been achieved beyond my expectation. Take Kuala Lumpur. It has ascended to a class on par with other metropolitan areas in the world.

Kuala Lumpur has got all the facilities and the people have become sophisticated. But in terms of the development of culture, in terms of the resilience and perseverance of the Malays, I believe I haven't achieved much.

Q: When Datuk Seri mentioned about development of culture, which aspect of it are you referring to?

Dr Mahathir: I have learned a lot from history. After analysing the successes and failures of various races in the world, I discovered that we will not succeed if we have values which cannot support or are suitable for development.

Values are part of culture. That explains why I have been repeatedly emphasising discipline, hardwork, honesty and the need to set aside personal interest.

These are the values we should uphold. If we subscribe to these values, we will certainly succeed.

If we want to compare the values of the Malays and the Chinese, we will find that the Chinese work harder than the Malays. We must accept this reality.

It's not that the Malays cannot do it. They simply refuse to work hard and do things they are supposed to do. At times, I feel very sad about this.

Once, I walked on a bund on a padi field in Kedah. On one side, I saw a plot of land on which the padi was well grown while on the other side, it was not growing that well.

I asked why it was growing well on this side and the reply was: "Oh, it belongs to a Chinese."

We have the same type of land and yet the Chinese are doing better. Our problem is we do not want to learn from the Chinese.

To some of us, for a Chinese to work hard, it is expected of them because they are Chinese. What's wrong with emulating and working hard like them?

For example, look at how the Chinese are tending to their farms and you would know why their crops are growing well ... why can't the Malays be like them?

Why is it so difficult for us to tend our farms? Ask ourselves how many times do we go to our padi fields. Not as frequently as the Chinese. After planting the seeds, we return home and take a nap.

We are not lacking skills. Our problem is that we do not stick to good work ethics.

I have tried hard to instil this culture. I held a course in Langkawi to motivate them (Malays) but I didn't get any response...I have been unable to change this culture.

Changing our culture will not make us less Malay. We will achieve success, if we are able to change our culture.

It is impossible for a pupil and a university student to excel if they don't study. They are not stupid, but they are not studying.

If they really study, they will achieve better results. I still can

not understand why 70 per cent enrolment to universities are female and only 30 per cent are male.

What are the men doing? It is not that we cannot do it, we just don't want to do it. At times, we feel very disappointed.

Values are part of culture. That explains why I have been repeatedly emphasising discipline, hardwork, honesty and the need to set aside personal interest.

They still refuse to do it despite our advice. In the end, they criticise and accuse me of giving priority only to worldly matters, and not bothered about the hereafter.

Q: If we talk about the Malays not being keen to excel, do you think we need to look back a long way at

how things were done in areas like education?

Dr Mahathir: When I assumed the Education Minister's post from 1974 to 1975, I decided then that if we wanted to instil a culture or sense of values which could lead us to



success, then it had to begin from school.

To achieve it, we must have teachers who were able to teach the new culture. And to get teachers who could teach this new culture, we must have lecturers at teachers' training colleges who embraced these values.

Therefore, I invited principals of teachers' training colleges and I talked and explained to them the importance of instilling these values.

I spoke about why the new culture had to be sown from school and why we needed to have lecturers and teachers who were able to teach the new values.

But I was appalled because in the ensuing dialogue, the first question that came from them was on salary and that it was not enough.

It appeared that my one hour of speech meant nothing to them. I felt like crying. They didn't see its significance, they couldn't see it. This was not about salary.

Q: Where have we gone wrong?

Dr Mahathir: The problem is we don't want to hear good but unpopular and necessary things. I tried for 27 years. I have been trying until today. We spoke with students and they still couldn't understand.

They kept on saying that all these were their rights...getting a place in universities is their absolute right. They would get the place no matter which Government rules. They feel that they don't have to study because they would be protected.

We explained to them. Look at other countries, other developing countries. Do they taste the same success as we do?

They would reply, that's their country. This is Malaysia, Malaysia is endowed to be rich. They assumed that everything would fall in their laps.

Q: Is this Datuk Seri's disappointment all these years?

Dr Mahathir: I am disappointed because I don't have the time.

Q: Is your disappointment due to the students' failure to change their attitude after 27 years?

Dr Mahathir: It is not just about not changing their attitude, I don't know, probably I was wrong. But our culture has become worse now, it is not getting better.

It has something to do with democracy because it accords rights to everyone.

As a result, when we want to do something good but unpopular, they would say if the Government doesn't succumb to their demand, they would ensure that the party would not win in the election.

They would say that they will help the opposition party and the opposition party would take advantage of the situation by inculcating a sentiment which benefits nobody. This is what we are seeing today.

Today if we tell the students that they must study, they will turn around and say, in today's world, they must be given freedom.

Students feel there will always be people behind them, people who would always be there to support them. That scares us, thus, we cannot put pressure on them to study.

Q: Do you think your attempt,

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which was rejected by some students, to change their attitude was the factor which led university students to be anti-government?

Dr Mahathir: They make it an issue. The reason is, it has become part of Malay culture. They (Malays) like it easy. That's why we have a huge number of foreign workers — because we like it easy.

When the Chinese and Indians migrated to Malaya, the Malays withdrew. They no longer wanted to be a shopkeeper, they gave up their small businesses...they preferred to buy from a shop owned by a Chinese.

They searched for something easy. When the Chinese came here, they made life easy for the Malays. The Malays liked it, until we reached a stage where the Chinese and Indians were better off than them.

If they (Chinese) sought independence then, we would have become a country like Singapore.

In Singapore, the Malays are the minority. In fact, the Malays were the minority in 1925 and 1926. Malay youths are unaware of this because we never taught them our history.

Unless saved by the severe recession in the late 1920s and early 1930s which forced the Chinese and Indians to return to their homelands, the Malays would have been the minority then.

When we become the minority, we would lose our status completely.

Q: There's a view that the protection given to the Malays led them to adopting the "like it easy" attitude. Do you think reducing the level of protection will change that?

Dr Mahathir: Our concern is if we reduce the level of protection of the Malays, they will fail totally in view of their weaknesses. While giving them protection, we also want to explain to them why they have to be self-reliant.

But they don't want to listen to our advice. Some students went to the extent of saying this is an old issue.

Q: Despite raising the alarm, the Malays continue to indulge in negative activities. Have the Malays responded to this alarm because it appears that they have ignored it?

Dr Mahathir: Although they have been reminded repeatedly, our culture is still on the decline. In the past, Umno was clean of money politics, it is not anymore now.

We have explained that it (money politics) will destroy them and that any race which is corrupt will be annihilated and we will lose our independence.

these wrong values, who can change it?

Dr Mahathir: Once, I wanted the Islamic values to be assimilated in the Government because Islamic values are noble.

It turned the race of the Jahilliyah into the world's most civilised race for 1,300 years.

Who were the Jahilliyah? When they embraced Islam, they accepted all the Islamic values and not only about fasting and praying.

In Islam, when you make promises, it is compulsory for you to keep it and you must be honest. You will not take things which are not yours. If you are a civil servant, you will not take money that belongs to the Government.

That's why I asked for the assimilation of Islamic values in the Government. Unfortunately, today, when we asked them to teach Islamic values at Government offices, apart from touching on *fardhu ain*, they influenced others by saying that the Government is less Islamic because we don't im-

want of trying; we try. As I have said earlier, when we want to do something good, and since we are in a democratic country, people can twist things and show that what we are doing is not good.

For instance, I would like to know why am I called *dajal* (evil), what have I done, what have I done that has led people to call me *firaun* (pharaoh)?

But those things have stuck in the minds of many people. They close their eyes to the things that I do. Even when I pray, they say it is not true. And that it is only a *sandiwara*.

They do not want to accept what we say even though it is the truth. And those who twist the facts realise what they are doing. To them, it is for political gain; whatever, the end justifies the means for these people.

They say even if they have to work with devils, they are willing to. These are the people who are responsible for our failure to create good Malay culture. But they can-

We explained ... I pleaded, I cried, I prayed, I did everything ... it didn't change.

They argued what's wrong with taking only RM10? They said we didn't take much, just RM10.

It is sad. If they took RM1 million and sold their rights, that's different but they sold their rights for just RM10!

Instead of using their rights to support a good person, they sold it for RM10 to support a person of bad character.

One day, we will even sell our country if we become a race which can easily be bribed. This was what happened in the past. In the past, the Malay rulers easily disposed off their land to anybody who could offer them a place or help deliver the throne.

You can imagine my disappointment. I tried, I talked to them, every year I spoke about it at the Umno general assembly...in 20 years, (I gave) 20 speeches and the stress is the same. I didn't speak about other things, I spoke about the Malays.

Q: In one of the closed-door meetings, Datuk Seri spoke about two major problems besetting the Malays -- corruption and changes in values. How do we solve the problem?

Dr Mahathir: Change the culture and come up with a new culture. We must have internal resistance and a strong defence.

We cannot rely on others to curb corruption. Some say corruption will be eradicated as we have the Anti-Corruption Agency ... but corruption is still there.

If we change our culture and consider corruption as a disgusting and humiliating thing to indulge in, and if we make an effort to reject it, we will succeed.

For example, do you know why you don't take drugs? Why you don't take heroin and why you don't drink?

It is because your culture says that's not a good thing to do. That's what I am trying to do ... to build in your culture a rejection of bad values. You reject it yourself.

Nobody will know if you decide to take ganja ... but you don't do it. Why didn't you do it and why didn't you become a thief?

Because inside you there is a built-in mechanism which deters you from doing these bad things.

Q: If Datuk Seri cannot change

pose the *hudud* laws and they would be guilty for not opposing a Government which does not uphold the *hudud laws*.

As a Muslim who holds to Islamic values, it is an obligation to keep to his attestation that is to teach others Islamic values and not teach them about bad politics.

Q: Why do you think the people were influenced by it? Why do you think we have more problems when the awareness of Islam seems to be increasing?

Dr Mahathir: I don't agree that the awareness of Islam among Malays is becoming greater. It is just the appearance, not the substance.

It is sad. If they took RM1 million and sold their rights, that's different but they sold their rights for just RM10!

There are many major things in the Quran which could guide us. Unfortunately, many of us prefer to focus on trivial matters.

We will have problems if we don't focus on the true teachings of Islam ... there are many things in the Quran which they have ignored.

Quran teaches us about the whole life such as how to behave and how to face our enemies but we don't teach all these.

Instead, some people taught others to hate others whom they perceived as not Islamic.

If we can hold to the true teaching of Islam, *Inshaallah* we will achieve the same success as the Jahilliyah race.

Q: Has the level of *Bersih*, *Cekap dan Amanah* (clean, efficient and trustworthy) and *Kepimpinan Melalui Teladan* (leadership by example) eroded and failed to achieve what they were supposed to achieve?

Dr Mahathir: Well, it is not for

not stop these physical things.

They want to stop us from spending our money, developing the country. We have the money, we have policies, our country is developed. We know how to manage our money and we have succeeded in that.

Q: You seemed to have developed a high level of resistance. Certainly you're not going to be discouraged by all this?

Dr Mahathir: Yes, I will try, I will try. For me, since I was in school, I have seen things that needed to be done by the Malays, which were not done.

I am also like those who want to



criticise other people. But then I tell myself, while I criticise people, I should be responsible enough to do something for myself.

What is my contribution directly? When you ask yourself that question, you will find that there are things that you can do.

As a student, I thought the thing that I could do well is of course to succeed in whatever I did in my studies. I worked very hard at my studies. Of course my father was very strict.

The thing I could do was to succeed in whatever I did in my studies.

Q: Why are the students now, who get more emphasis on religion in school, easily influenced compared to students in the past?

Dr Mahathir: I don't think there is more emphasis on religion. If they really stress on the true teachings, they will be successful.

But the stress is actually politics, of just trying to give an Islamic appearance.

It appears the Malays are more religious now than in the past but we must not forget that in the past, we didn't see Malay boys stepping on and tearing the Quran.

We have to know why when we have provided schools with religious teachers, we are faced with more problems.

In the past, we didn't have religious teachers in school. You learned about the religion in evening classes and yet we didn't have all these problems.

But today, we have cases of a father killing his own son, a teenager raping and murdering another teenager ... there is something wrong.

book) — since you are not an *ulama* or a religious man, people will not believe

If I say this is white but a religious man says that this is black, then this is black because the *tok guru* says it's black.

They have an advantage over this and that is why it is very difficult for many Umno leaders below me to talk about this matter convincingly.

Q: Do you think other leaders can argue with equal force as you as seen in your winding up speech at

years of service?

Dr Mahathir: To take action against Umno members. I persuaded them, I coaxed them but eventually I was forced to take action. I realise that I would become unpopular. Sometimes I knew that the actions I would be taking would make me unpopular. But if I think it is the right thing to do, I would do it.

Q: What will be the formula for the Government to survive in this environment?

Dr Mahathir: Internal strength. If we believe that what we do is good, I think we can survive but if we don't believe in what we do, then we will think that we cannot survive.

Q: What about support from your family?

Dr Mahathir: Yes, support from family helps. People support me. Sometimes when I am walking, people come and shake my hand. They say they appreciate what I'm doing. "We support Datuk, don't worry," they say. It makes my day.

It is fine ... even if it is only one or two persons. If we read foreign newspapers, I am the most hated man — that's what they say.

In Malacca (recently), there was a good turnout, they paid to attend the dinner ... the food was nothing much but they paid RM10 and 25,000 people turned up.

Q: What strength does Umno have now because people are starting to say that Umno is heading towards its destruction and what is the basis of your confidence that the party will continue to exist?

Dr Mahathir: I think the spirit is very much there. The spirit of realisation, the old leaders still remember, the new ones also realise (the need to be strong). For instance, there are those who studied overseas who dare to be jeered at for being members of Umno clubs. These are the people who will carry the torch.

Q: This is my personal opinion. I do not see other leaders whose talent and abilities are close to yours. I saw this on the final day of the Umno general assembly. When you gave the winding-up speech, we could see the obvious gap between you and the other leaders. This is a

And why does it only involve the Malays?

Why not the Chinese? Why only the Malays? Those with AIDS are Malays, drugs also involve the Malays, rape and murders ... you name anything that is bad, the majority are Malays.

Q: In your view, why is this happening?

Dr Mahathir: It is because the people are becoming very political. They don't care what would happen to the Malays as long as they win some influence, even if they have to misinterpret the Quran to garner that influence.

Some ignore the teachings to concentrate on political matters.

We found out that some religious teachers are not teaching about religion. (In one case) the teacher asked a student to put a plate on a piece of paper and draw a circle and paint it green and it became a Pas symbol.

I am going to be frank about this. There's an instance where pupils were taught to scorn me.

A teacher related how he visited a friend, who was also a teacher, and heard his friend's children swear at Dr Mahathir.

The child did not know anything. But he has been taught at that young age to hate Dr Mahathir.

I don't understand why a person who is educated in religion could show support to another person who uses vulgar words.

Tell me in which holy book it has been stated that God also swore. That religious person had also defended Shahnun (Ahmad, MP for Sik)

Show me which holy book or the Quran contains the word which Shahnun had used (in his book).

And yet we have a religious person saying that God also swore and his disciples accepted it as the truth.

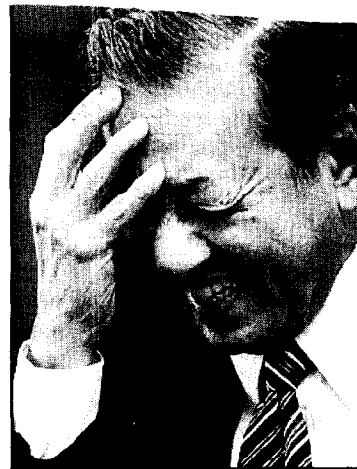
Q: That is a political situation, but what can Umno do to effectively counter this and at the same time portray itself as a strong political force?

Dr Mahathir: I am trying to talk to them. I have tried. I have relentlessly talked to Umno about this matter. There are signs that my opinions are accepted. Umno will continue to be strong and *Insyaallah* we can counter this problem.

In fact, we discussed this matter the whole morning today (at last Wednesday's Cabinet meeting). (We discussed) what led Malay youngsters to worship Satan. What has happened to them?

We also discussed it at the Umno leadership level. We have to fight this convincingly because in Malaysia, the problem is when we talk, whether it is factual or you can verify it in the Quran, *hadith* (the saying of the Prophets) or *kitab* (holy

‘ I too want a few years for myself before I die, I want to write, I want to write a little bit, travel a bit. On the contrary, the older I become, the more work I have. ’



the Umno Assembly?.

Dr Mahathir: No, it is not with equal force but with some kind of force, at least we are on the right track. That is my wish.

Actually in Umno, be it good or bad, it is still a political force. It is not going to die so easily.

Q: In that situation, what is your expectation of Umno Youth and Puteri in countering or winning back the ground?

Dr Mahathir: I think Puteri can do it because their minds are still clear. I do not know how women could not be influenced by all these ideas (negative elements).

They (women) still want to learn. They are still serious (in their studies) although one or two could have been influenced ... sometimes they are just the victims.

Mothers and women are the hope of the Malays. Our hope relies on them more than men.

If we go to the market in Kota Baru, look at who are selling at the market (women) and go to coffee shops and see who are sitting there.

Q: Datuk Seri, you just talked about baseless accusations. In your 20 years of service, did you ever succumb to it, such as when people called you as Mahazalim etc?

Dr Mahathir: Yes, I was sad but to say that it disturbs my mind to the extent of losing my concentration on my work, not at all. If I was weak, I think I would not have survived.

Q: What is your wish to those who made the baseless accusations?

Dr Mahathir: I pray that one day they will realise what they had been saying were not true. Not everyone who believes the accusations before still believes them now, because they slander so much that people know that they are lies.

They said I fell from a horse, but I'm still here, then they said I was dead, again I'm still here. So eventually people know that they lied. They said a lot of things about me.

Q: What is the toughest decision you have ever made in your 20

concern of many people.

Dr Mahathir: A lot of people see it that way. If we compare Tun Razak (Hussein) and Tun Hussein (Onn), Tun Razak was more charismatic and more popular compared to Tun Hussein but the system was already in place, the Umno system was already there.

What we have done, first, we put the system in place, and we got the policy right. Secondly, it is the leadership. Sometimes the leadership is strong, sometimes it's not so but if the leadership is willing to hold on to the system, even though it is not excellent, it can happen.

Q: The Opposition is seen to be making a headway. Is Umno confident of doing well in the 2004 general election?

Dr Mahathir: I think by 2004, the reasons that made Umno look weak in 1999 would be lessened. We know that one of the reasons in 1999 was the feelings among some of the rakyat about the action taken against Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Q: You said you planned to step down in 1997. Are you thinking about that now?

Dr Mahathir: Yes, I want to retire. I am 76 but I don't belong to myself, I belong to the public.

Whatever I do, I must think of its consequences. There are people who say that if I say things like this there would be a scramble for power in the party. They don't want that. So what can I say? Say that I have plans that by next year I would retire? You know what will happen, there would be a tussle.

Q: You said at the general assembly that stepping down has become difficult now, can you elaborate on this?

Dr Mahathir: I can't talk about it. If I talk about it, my Cabinet colleagues will tell me not to talk because when I talk about it, problems will arise. That is why I don't like to talk.

I too want a few years for myself

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before I die, I want to write, I want to write a little bit, travel a bit. On the contrary, the older I become, the more work I have. I don't get to go on holidays like I used to.

Q: Your duties are getting larger now with you holding additional responsibilities as the Finance Minister and you have spoken in the past about spending more time at the grassroots level. Can you cope with the pace?

Dr Mahathir: I can, I know how to arrange my work and I work all the time, I don't stop working. When I go back home I write letters. Here I only see people, continuously from morning till afternoon.

If I don't see them, they will get angry and they will say that when we need their votes, we come and see them, but now when they want to see us they can't, they will say that we are arrogant. I want to see 1,000 people a day, if I can.

Q: We are wondering whether you really have time to sleep. How many hours do you sleep?

Dr Mahathir: I sleep. That's one thing I do because I know if I am going to work, I have to rest. I rest six hours a day.

Q: We wonder if you can really sleep with people calling you all sorts of names and with so many other problems?

Dr Mahathir: Occasionally, I was disturbed, but not so often.

Q: How do you divide your time between work, family and friends?

Dr Mahathir: Sometimes during the weekend, I spend one or two hours meeting people. Like during last weekend, my children took me to meet their friends at Port Dickson. To me it was sufficient.

The rest of the time I do my work. Even when I'm on holiday, I bring along my work, I do my own writing there. When it comes to reading, I read anytime, I never stop, in the car, in the bathroom.

Q: Do you have any complaints against the present Cabinet members?

Dr Mahathir: There's no problem with the Cabinet. Not all of those I appointed are old faces. There are new ones too, so to say all of them are old faces is wrong. It is my practice to extract as much work as possible from them. They do have their contributions and I don't get rid of people easily.

I inherited Datuk Hussein's (Onn) staff, I did not sideline any. When I became Prime Minister, Azizan (Petronas chairman Tan Sri Azizan Zainul Abidin) was the Chief Secretary to the Government, I did not remove him but he was

Aziz (Dr Mahathir's former principal private secretary Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Ismail) remained with me until he retired. I extended his service for another year. Although there were many complaints about him, I retained him.

I am not very particular when it comes to staff. There are some ministers, who, when taking over from other people, the first thing they do is to get rid of their secretary-generals and get new ones, their own people.

I am alright with them, I can work with anyone.

You know, (Datuk) Syed Hamid (Albar), Pak Lah (Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) — all of them were assigned to the Semangat 46 group, I still accepted them although they were from Team B.

Q: Datuk Seri, you have had four deputies of which three have already seen their way out. Do you have a different feeling each time a deputy leaves office?

Dr Mahathir: If you notice, it was not me who asked them to leave. I did not ask them to leave. They left themselves. Musa (Hitam) resigned

signed. I did not ask Ghafar to leave. He lost to Anwar.

I did not want to sack Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim but he had done inappropriate things.

I am responsible for the country. I could not have allowed such a person to be the Prime Minister. Although people will criticise me, I can't help it. I have to take action to save the Government, Umno and the country.

So, I had no other alternative. It's not that I planned to sack people as I like, I myself had wanted to retire. If not, today you would be interviewing someone else instead of myself. (Laughter)

Q: But at the recent Umno assembly, a delegate from Kedah said he was sure what went through the minds of those seated on the stage when Datuk Seri was given a standing ovation at the end of winding-up speech. They probably feel that they better forget about an immediate transfer of the baton. In fact, the delegate said he would not be surprised if Datuk Seri stays beyond 2004, provided your health holds. Can you comment on that?

Dr Mahathir: But I must be respon-

lays and the people. All these are responsibilities.

If I just want to think about myself, I can do like Harold Wilson by just quitting. But I cannot do something like that.

Q: Will that ever happen?

Dr Mahathir: No I wouldn't do it because it will be very irresponsible.

Q: Sometimes we were wondering what would happen when we got up and found that you have "gone"?

Dr Mahathir: In my life I have not run away from responsibility, even as a doctor. Those who worked with me know. My registrars know that if I'm on duty, they can sleep, I don't call them, I'll attend to all the cases myself, no matter how serious.

Q: Considering your experience, if the Cabinet requested that you assume the Senior Minister's post, would you accept it?

Dr Mahathir: To assume a Minister's post, "no", but if my views are needed once in a while, that becomes a duty for me, I will do, but to impose myself after my welcome is finished, I wouldn't do, it's not my way.

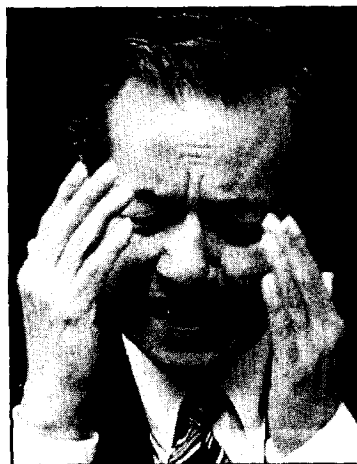
Q: What's your level of confidence of achieving the goals of Vision 2020?

Dr Mahathir: As a country, yes, we can do it, but what I fear most

Q: Can we achieve it in an uncertain political environment?

Dr Mahathir: We still can achieve it, I am confident Umno will continue to be successful. It is hard for Pas to win as they are rejected by the Chinese and the Indians.

And the Malays themselves,



“ Yes, I want to retire. I am 76 but I don't belong to myself, I belong to the public. ”

ent style, but he wants to implement Umno's policies. How he implements them I cannot guarantee, but the things are in place.

So that is my responsibility. My responsibility is to chart the future of the party, the future of the Government and the future of the Ma-

lays when it comes to the crunch, they will not. That is my assessment, I may be wrong.

But I think we can survive until 2020. But my worry is that while the country progresses towards being a developed nation, will the Malays also be a developed and pro-

gressive race?

Q: If you were given one wish on the day you reach your 20 years in office, what would that be

Dr Mahathir: You know what it is ... that the Malays would change. That they will change their culture and they can become as successful as anybody else ... Pride, we must have pride, we must defend our dignity.

Others have never known what it is like to be colonised. I have been through that ... terrible, shameful, I could not stand being colonised, that is one thing that I ... it is terrible ... I can't even describe it.

Q: How would you describe your time as Prime Minister, as Umno President and head of a family? First as Umno president.

Dr Mahathir: Yes, there are ups and downs, but lastly I cannot blame others, if I failed it is because I have not been able to do what I set out to do. Otherwise my conscience is clear I have done my best, if I fail it is not for want of trying.

So whatever people say, I know they were not right. I know that I have done things sincerely for ... its not for me, I don't need money, I don't care about money, I always tease others by saying how many plates of noodles can you eat. Even if you had millions of ringgit, how much can you eat because after that you are going to die anyway. Are you going to bring your money along?

Q: As the Prime Minister?

Dr Mahathir: As the PM, I think I have enjoyed in a way my role as PM because I have been in a position to do what I wanted to do. If we are not the PM, we cannot do anything.

That is the main thing about having power. It is being able to do things, if you have no power you can't do things.

So as the PM I had the power, I used the power to achieve what I think is good for the country. To help make a difference.

But I may become unpopular in the process but that has never bothered me. I have criticised the Malays, I have criticised the Chinese. I don't go for popularity. I'll go for what I think is right. People ask for money and so on, I condemn. You want to get money you work for it."

Q: As head of a family?

Dr Mahathir: Yes ... as head of the family, on one hand maybe I have had not much time for the family.

On the other hand, I just wonder if I'm not the PM, would I have the privilege to help plan a vision (for the country). I'd certainly like to enjoy a little bit of family life.