

PM tells secret of his youthful looks

Nst 2 3 MAY 2002

From Syed Nadzri in Seoul

A MALAYSIAN student's curiosity about the secrets of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's youthful looks was answered last night with a good 15-minute lecture on the dangers of smoking.

It occurred during question time towards the end of the Prime Minister's dinner with the Malaysian community in Seoul when the student posed the oft-asked question into the microphone.

"I know many people want to know what pills I take," Dr Mahathir answered to roars of laughter.

"I do take vitamin pills if that's what people want to know. But more than that it's a healthy lifestyle. I don't smoke."

The 76-year-old Prime Minister, trained as a medical doctor, said he never liked smoking even when cigarettes of the Craven A and Rough

Rider brands were a rave in his younger days.

"Smoking is not only unhealthy, it is a known cause of cancer. But many people carry on with the habit regardless of the consequences.

"There are even habitual smokers in my Cabinet. They take long toilet breaks in the middle of meetings to have a smoke and they think I don't know," he said to more laughter.

The dinner, organised by the Malaysian Embassy in Seoul, was held to welcome Dr Mahathir in his three-day official visit to South Korea.

It was attended by Malaysian students studying in South Korean universities and Malaysians residing in the capital city.

The highlight of the evening was a lengthy but interesting Malaysian cultural performance by South Koreans who were up to the task. They performed all the major dances of Malaysia — from the *changgong* to the *kuda kepang* to

the *sumazau* with Indian and Chinese bits thrown in.

It is understood that Tourism Malaysia had a big part in organising and choreographing the performance which seemed to impress the Prime Minister.

Even the food was all-Malaysian, complete with *rojak buah* and *mee mamak*.

Dr Mahathir in his speech advised the students to study hard as the country placed much hope on the youths of today to bring progress.

He said he was glad to note that Malaysian students in Japan and Korea have remained unspoilt by instigators who tried to sow hatred against the Government.

"The students here look happy and cheerful and they get along with one another well, unlike Malaysian students in certain countries who have been influenced by undesirable elements to the point that they become distracted from studies," he added.