

Oct 31 handover longest transfer of power: Don

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by Santha Oorjitham

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's handover of the premiership to Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on Friday will be the most orderly in Malaysia's history.

"This is definitely the longest-planned handover," said historian Datuk Dr Khoo Kay Kim, "although in the other cases, there was never really any doubt that the deputy prime minister would take over."

While there was no speculation about who would be Malaysia's next prime minister, he said, many were now guessing about who would be his deputy.

The Professor Emeritus with Universiti Malaya's History Department pointed out that the country's first two leadership changes took place in times of crisis.

Malaysia's first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, announced that he was stepping down on Sept 21, 1970 - while the country was under the management of the National Operations Council (NOC) following the riots of May 13 1969.

And the country's second leader, Tun Abdul Razak Datuk Hussein, died in office on Jan 14, 1976.

Each succession was conducted differently.

On Sept 22, 1970, Tun Razak arrived first at the Istana Negara, at 9.28am and was shown into the guest room.

The Tunku arrived two minutes later and was admitted to the Throne Room, where he submitted his resignation to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, the Sultan of Kedah, his nephew.

It was Tuanku Abdul Halim's first official function, after being sworn in as Malaysia's fifth King the previous day.

Abdul Rahman, and presented the new government's political testament.

He said the NOC would continue to function in its existing form until Parliament met in February the following year.

"Kaum Ibu" (now Wanita Umno) leader Tan Sri Fatimah Hashim then blessed the Tunku, Tun Razak and Tun Dr Ismail with saffron rice and scented water.

Datuk Hussein Onn was sworn in as the country's third Prime Minister by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Yahya Petra, at 9.30 am on Jan 15, 1976 - the day after Tun Razak died.

Dressed in a white baju

office.

The following morning, he witnessed Mahathir taking his oath of office in front of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan Ahmad Shah.

Mahathir was seated on the left of the throne while Datuk Hussein was seated on the right.

All the cabinet ministers (except Foreign Minister Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen who was in New York) were present, as well as the acting Lord President (a post now renamed as Chief Justice), the President of the Dewan Negara, the Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat, the Chief of Defence Forces, the Inspector-General of Police and other senior Government officials.

In a separate ceremony in another hall of the Istana, Datuk Hussein was awarded the Darjah Seri Maharaja Mangku Negara (SMN), carrying the title "Tun".

Tun Hussein and Dr Mahathir then adjourned to the Prime Minister's Department for the handover.

After Dr Mahathir announced last year that he would be retiring, said Prof Khoo, for some time the question of whether he would be succeeded by his deputy "appeared to be open."

"But with the Prime Minister repeating that it would be Pak Lah, the speculation turned to who would be Deputy Prime Minister," said the historian, adding that it was the new Prime Minister's prerogative to choose.

"The Tunku called on party members to give their full support to the new Prime Minister."

Tun Razak was then escorted to the Throne Room, where the King handed him his letter of appointment, witnessed by the Tunku.

No cabinet ministers or dignitaries were present.

About an hour later, the Tunku and Tun Razak both met over 400 Umno leaders, MPs and state assemblymen at the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

The Tunku called on party members to be loyal and give their full support to the new Prime Minister.

Tun Razak named his deputy, Tun Dr Ismail Datuk

and black sampin, Hussein wiped away tears during the ceremony which was witnessed by cabinet ministers, the Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat, Istana officials and his own physician.

He chaired his first cabinet meeting at the Prime Minister's Department an hour later, to plan the funeral for the late Tun Razak.

Five years later, he handed over the premiership to his deputy, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

On July 15, 1981, Hussein chaired his last cabinet meeting and cleared up his

Since independence on Aug 31, 1957, Malaya/Malaysia has been led by four prime ministers. Preceding Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad were:

TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN PUTRA

(1957-1970)

Known as the Father of Independence for his contributions and sacrifices in bringing the country from colonialism to independence. The Tunku became the first prime minister of the Federation of Malaya from 1957 to 1963, and of Malaysia from 1963 to 1970. He was born on Feb 8, 1903, in Alor Star and is the seventh prince of Sultan Abdul Hamid Shah, the 24th Sultan of Kedah. The Tunku received his early education at the Debsurin School, Bangkok and Penang Free School.



TUN ABDUL RAZAK HUSSEIN

(1970-1976)

Remembered as the Father of Development for his contributions in national and rural development.

Born in Pulau Keladi, Pahang, on March 11, 1922. Razak is the only child to Datuk Hussein Mohd Taib and Teh Fatimah Daud.

He joined the Malay Administrative Service in 1939, was awarded a scholarship to study at Raffles College in Singapore in 1940.

His studies at the college ceased with the Second World War. With a Malayan Union scholarship, Razak left for Britain in 1947 to read law.

In 1950 he received a Degree of an Utter Barrister from Lincoln's Inn. Razak is renowned for launching the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971 and the formation of the National Front (Barisan Nasional) on Jan 1, 1973 to replace the ruling Alliance Party.



TUN HUSSEIN ONN

(1976-1981).

Succeeded Razak, his brother-in-law, after the latter died in office following a heart attack on Jan 15, 1976.

Born in Johor Baru on Feb 12, 1922 to Datuk Onn Jaafar and Datin Halimah Hussein, he received his early education

in Singapore and at the English College in Johor Baru.

After leaving school, he joined the Johor Military Forces as a cadet in 1940 and was sent a year later to the Indian Military Academy in Dehra Dun, India. He returned in 1945 and was appointed Commandant of the Johor Baru Police Depot.

The following year he joined the Malaya Civil Service as an assistant administrative officer in Segamat. Coming from a family with deep nationalistic spirit and political roots, Hussein resigned from the civil service to go into politics.

In 1949, he became the first youth chief of Umno (United Malays National Organisation), a party his father helped establish. In 1950, he was elected the Umno secretary general.

He however left Umno in 1951 to join his father in forming the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP). With IMP losing momentum, Hussein left for London to read law at Lincoln's Inn, qualifying as a Barrister-at-Law. Hussein returned to politics in 1968 after being persuaded by Razak to rejoin Umno.

Hussein's meteoric rise continued when on Aug 13, 1973, he succeeded the late Tun Dr Ismail as the Deputy Prime Minister. Hussein is remembered as the Father of Unity.