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A much-loved boss

Firdaus Abdullah

Datuk Hashim Makaruddin,

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister

"HE is very easy and simple to work for. Maybe others find it hard to cope with Having served Dr Mahathir for about 13 years now, Hashim feels it is easy work  
"We have very strong feelings for him. It is sad to think that he'll be leavin  
"If you are not sure, just ask him. After some time, we understood him. He is  
"After some time we were able to read his facial and body expressions. When he Does the Prime Minister listen to views and suggestions from his staff?  
"Yes, if you can convince and impress him, he will take your suggestion, but i  
"If you justify your case he will listen and consider ... that is the Dr Mahat For Hashim, the toughest and most testing time for Dr Mahathir was during the He revealed how Dr Mahathir, while on an official three-nation visit to Latin  
"We were on an official visit to Cuba, Chile and Argentina. Everywhere we went  
"He was in constant consultation with Bank Negara ... trying to work out a str  
"He has always been very calm, steady in the face of difficullties and problem  
"He has sacrificed a lot for the nation. Even when he returns home from overse  
"During an official trip to the Silicon Valley (in the US) to promote the Mult  
"The SS guys just couldn't believe it for the simple reason that they were alr  
How is Dr Mahathir so accommodating of the Press?  
"He reads a lot and is always abreast of things happening throughout the world  
"The foreign Press normally don't like what he says but they like to attend hi  
"It is sad when people misunderstand him; what he has done so far is for the n  
Sufi Yusoff, assistant Press secretary  
"AS a boss, Dr Mahathir is very quiet and reserved. Contrary to his public ima  
"When I first reported for duty as the Prime Minister's assistant Press secret  
"I think those words speak a lot of what Dr Mahathir is, as a boss and as a le  
"The responsibility of serving Dr Mahathir is heavy but his energy and serious  
Having served Dr Mahathir for the last five years, the former New Straits Time  
Describing the Prime Minister as a remarkable person with extraordinary self c  
"What I admire most is his super-strong will and the resolve to succeed," Sufi  
Repeatedly appearing lost for words, Sufi paused when asked what it is that he  
"I wonder how he maintains his cool and composure during `turbulence'. That is  
"But he just went against the odds ... at that point we also had the Reformasi  
"There were forces within and from outside trying to push the Government out  
"While he proved to a lot of people that he was right and Malaysia had the ind  
"He made sure everything was put back in place and today, we are all benefitin  
Relating the way how the PM toiled daily to understand trade and financial cha  
How does he think Dr Mahathir should be remembered by the future generation?  
"How they remember him is one thing but the greatest tribute to him would be h  
"You could just remember him as a great statesman but if you don't live up to  
"The greatest gift you can give to the man is to ensure that his vision, his d  
Sgt-Maj Roslan Othman, close escort since August 1981  
HAVING practically tailed Dr Mahathir for the past 22 years in his capacity as  
Roslan, who joined Dr Mahathir as a newly-married 23-year-old police constable  
"I'm opting to retire because if Dr Mahathir still needs me after his retireme  
"I've spent most of my time with Dr Mahathir, and without doubt he is a role m  
"The one thing I admire most in him is his punctuality ... no matter if it's a  
"Maybe he developed this trait from his early days and later on as a doctor.  
How is Dr Mahathir as his boss for more than 22 years?  
"He is always punctual, never shouts at his staff even if they had done someth  
Roslan, or better known as Abang Lan among journalists, has sacrificed much ti

"They have been very supportive although I hardly have time for them. There we For Roslan, the most shocking moment in his life was when Dr Mahathir experien  
"If I'm not mistaken, it was in 1989. This was at the old Seri Perdana in Jala  
"Dr Mahathir was in pain but he refused to go to hospital saying `saya tak dak  
"It was later confirmed that he had suffered a mild attack and required a bypa  
"There were numerous suggestions of the best hospitals and specialists from ar  
"He said something like `Who will trust our hospitals and doctors if I as the  
Dr Mahathir, as Roslan explains, is also a very humble person.

"When we are on visits outside the city, Dr Mahathir doesn't like loud sirens  
The sudden demise of tycoon Tan Sri Yahaya Ahmad and his wife together with th  
"He cried openly when we were at Tan Sri Yahaya's house in Marang (Terengganu)  
Datuk Mohammad Ali, ADC, since 1978

KNOWN merely as "Pak Ali" to most who have come close to Dr Mahathir since 197  
He has treasured memories of 25 years serving the man who is admired by many.

"Time is more precious than gold and as everybody knows, he is always punctual  
The Prime Minister, who may seem serious or "fierce" to many, is actually humb

"Whenever he sees children among the crowd waiting to greet him or at the shop  
His other passion is horse riding. Many also do not know that Dr Mahathir can

"That was a long time ago before he started riding horses. I used to accompany  
According to Pak Ali, Dr Mahathir has many good traits which should be emulate

Anybody can talk and preach about all the good values in life, but to "walk th  
"Dr Mahathir walks the talk and I think this is one of his strongest values wh

Pak Ali revealed that while abroad, either during holidays or on official duty  
"You could see his joy whenever he finds our products. Sometimes, he would cal

"That is Dr Mahathir, a perfectionist who believes in constant improvement."

Pak Ali, who extended his contract with the police after his retirement three

"The years I've spent with Dr Mahathir have been the most important part of my  
For Pak Ali, the day Dr Mahathir had a heart attack in 1989 was the most chall

"It will be very difficult for anyone to emulate him," Pak Ali concluded.

Ismail Manaf, 57

Close escort since 1978

"All these years I have never heard Dr Mahathir complain he was tired or lazy.

Better known as Pak Mail, he has been one of Dr Mahathir's bodyguards since 19

"As a boss, Dr Mahathir is a gem of a man who understands our (bodyguard) duti

"He doesn't like to see people being pushed away by his guards. Serving Dr Mah

"He has never yelled at any of us. I can't recall even a single moment when he

According to Pak Mail, the most taxing period during his tenure with Dr Mahath

"The situation was critical at that time because the issue involved Sultans an

"As expected, Dr Mahathir just brushed it aside and continued with his duties,

Pak Mail, who has six grown-up children, feels Dr Mahathir is a simple person

He said Dr Mahathir would buy "all kinds" of books and magazines ... even thos

"Among all the trips with Dr Mahathir, the trip to Antarctica is the most memo

Asked about his plans after Dr Mahathir's retirement on Friday, he said: "Da

"If at all my services are required, I am ever ready to serve them forever ...

Mohd Shawal Agos, Driver

MOHD Shawal Agos has been driving Dr Mahathir around for the past 22 years.

Speaking candidly about his experiences, Mohd Shawal said: "Once, while drivin

"That made me understand him more as a person, and personally I've learned a l

"For instance, during my early days after joining him in 1982, Dr Mahathir tol

The 52-year-old former Public Works Department driver is full of respect and g

"He loves cars and enjoys driving around whenever he can find time from his ev

"Normally it would be on Sundays. We would leave Kuala Lumpur (Putrajaya for t

"He also liked to visit construction sites of important development projects s

Dr Mahathir also takes notes of the things that he sees during his driving ses

"Once he asked me to drive him to Dataran Merdeka. Once there, he started coun

"On another occasion when Dr Mahathir was driving towards the Karak Highway, w

"While one would naturally look for an alternative route, Dr Mahathir endured

"There are many more such incidents and instances. All these have served as a  
He also said Dr Mahathir would pay for parking fees imposed on his private car  
"Once a toll collector was shocked to see that the person paying for the RM1 c  
For Shawal, Oct 31 will be a sad day but he agrees that Dr Mahathir needs all  
"He has sacrificed his entire life for us and I'm so happy to have served him  
Mohamad Nazri Sulaiman, 36

Prime Minister's office boy since 1996.

"ALTHOUGH I'm just an office boy, I'm proud to be the office boy to Dr Mahathi  
"He is a very humble and simple man who treats people with respect," he said.  
While Dr Mahathir is naturally a disciplined, hardworking and no-nonsense perso  
Being in the Prime Minister's office by 7.30am daily, Nazri revealed that Dr M  
"The first newspaper he reads without fail is the New Straits Times and later  
"His favourite drink is Nescafe O," Nazri says, stressing that Dr Mahathir wou  
How is the boss in the office?

"He's a very straightforward person. If there is anything which is not to his

"It's been a pleasure serving him because he makes you feel comfortable. This

"I'm sad he is leaving but I respect his decision. Maybe he needs the rest be

\* The writer is NST's Staff Correspondent at Putrajaya