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Accommodating and witty

Datuk A. Kadir Jasin
Editor-In-Chief, Berita Publishing

DR MAHATHIR makes headlines. That makes him a favourite with the Press. You could even see the belligerent foreign journalists "like" him in their benci tapi rindu. But while journalists love his ability to continuously give them headline stories, if you are going to have any kind of "problem" (note the quotation) at all, with him, he strongly believes that the headlines make the stories and that more people read them. My first journalism-related encounter with Dr Mahathir took place at his Maha. I was desperately looking for a job after failing to get a place in the university. The question of laku did not quite register in my mind. I was in dire need of a job. He wrote a nice one on his typewriter, claiming that he knew me well. It was on that day I got the job and he went on to make headlines with his book *The Malay Dilemma*. Dr Mahathir and other economic ministers - including the likes of Finance (Ten For a few months in 1976/77, Dr Mahathir and the late Raja Tun Mohar Raja Badi). We would call him on the phone late in the evening and he would refer us to Ra. My last serious journalism-related meeting with Dr Mahathir was in early 2000. At the risk of being presumptuous, I thought we had a good meeting - agreeing to meet. Thank you and God speed, Doctor.

Azmi M. Anshar

Assistant news editor, E-Media

ANECDOTES of just how tireless, cool and articulate the Prime Minister is can be found in my book. I never realised the extent of his range until I was assigned to cover him. After completing the farewell pleasantries, Dr Mahathir took a brisk walk towards the car. After a few minutes of browsing, the Prime Minister took two books to the paymaster. I don't remember exactly the title of the books but I remember what it was all about. Not exactly light reading, I wondered. The Prime Minister must have read my memoirs. "I want to get ideas on how to make our cities beautiful," he said as he paid for the books. Another incident was in 1986. It typically showcased the Prime Minister's wry sense of humour. Dr Mahathir was giving a routine Press conference at the Putra World Trade Centre. "What do you mean I am not accessible? What do you call this?" he said, pointing at me. "Do you think the Prime Ministers or Presidents of some countries allow this sort of behaviour?" "Now look at this reporter," he quipped, pointing at me who was closest to him. I had long hair and wore a T-shirt and blue jeans. "I don't stop him from being a reporter. Later, word got to the powers-that-be about what the PM quipped about me and I was fired." Ashraf Abdullah

News editor

THE Prime Minister has always been accommodating and witty when dealing with reporters. I have stopped the Prime Minister to ask him questions at various places, on various occasions. One of those occasions was during the visit of the President of Burkina Faso. It was a strange occasion because being Head of State, Compaore was not supposed to be seen in public. Not knowing the person next to him was the President of Burkina Faso (I have no idea how he got there), I was speaking to Dr Mahathir for a good five minutes, on an issue totally unrelated to the President. I also vividly remember an occasion, the date of which I forget, when Dr Mahathir promptly responded: "Why, are you interested to buy?" The reporter didn't say a word.

Dr Mahathir is a leader in his own league. There will never be another Dr Mahathir. Noor Adzman Baharuddin

Penang bureau chief

DR MAHATHIR has a good sense of humour.

An example of this when I was covering the Prime Minister during his visit to Penang. Present too was Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon.

Koh, who had noticed me from the bunch of "Kedah reporters" waiting anxiously. Just then Dr Mahathir approached us and Koh introduced me and said I had been The Prime Minister's witty response took all of us, including the Press-friend Zubaidah Abu Bakar

Specialist writer

I'M sure I am not the only one who often wonders if Dr Mahathir has a secret. An incident in Langkawi a couple of years back when I was attached to the Alor. It was one of those regular visits to the island where Dr Mahathir - clad in white. Just past midday and under the hot sun, the entourage drove up Gunung Raya, where the tired look on the faces of some journalists who had followed him since early. What a shame. Dr Mahathir, many years older than most of the journalists, climbed. Some of us, including me, decided to find a shady area to rest as we were already. Suddenly we heard his voice: "Jom makan air," he said in the northern accent, when we looked up, there was a big smile on his face.

Hamidah Atan

Staff correspondent, Negri Sembilan

I REMEMBER covering Dr Mahathir when he and his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah. As usual and as expected, he was "mobbed" by many guests, adults and children. I tagged along with a Radio Televisyen Malaysia microphone in my hand.

He drew laughter with his sense of humour when he passed these witty remarks: Despite it being an unofficial function and in sweltering heat, Dr Mahathir still. He fielded the questions in his usual manner - precise, quick and straight-to-the-point. This great leader seems to know very well what the Press wanted and could get. At another unofficial function in Port Dickson on Aug 3, the hordes of Pressmen. Before long, the Press people were seen posing pictures with him - which he did. There were long queues of people who wanted to take pictures with him and never. This fatherly figure, who donned a cowboy hat on that day, also cracked jokes. He also did not turn down requests for him to write his signatures on their shirts. Such a thing definitely serves as once-in-a-lifetime memory for the people. There were also remarks from those who had shaken hands with the PM, including. To these people, including myself, meeting Dr Mahathir, even for just a few minutes. Dr Mahathir is just irreplaceable.