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Profiles of selected leaders

FIDEL CASTRO

FIDEL Castro claimed power in 1959 following the Cuban Revolution, an armed revolt that overthrew the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. He became Prime Minister of Cuba in 1961 and shortly thereafter cancelled elections and suspended Cuba's constitution. Castro ruled without regard for the 1940 constitution until 1976, when the nation enacted a new constitution that allowed limited electoral participation by Cuban voters. Cuba's National Assembly elected Castro president of the country in 1976.

He was born on Aug 13, 1926 in Mayari, Cuba and did a PhD in Law at the University of Havana in 1950.

During the 1960s through the 1980s, Castro allied himself with the communist Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR); in addition, he supported revolutions of national liberation in Latin America, Africa, and Asia and became a leader among heads of state in nations that had recently won their freedom from colonial powers.

Castro and his socialist government faced strong opposition from the United States.

In 1945 Castro entered the University of Havana Law School, where he became involved in politics. At the university, politics cen-Castro held tenaciously to power in the late 1990s. Castro's age and health are the only indicators of his departure from Cuba's highest office.

On May 11, 2001, Castro visited Malaysia and called on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. During his visit, both countries signed an economic, technical and scientific agreement - areas where they could work together.

Malaysia also agreed to grant Cuba RM57 million to buy palm oil under