

CNS4576

R GE 19-12 00236 EA401

aae

1990 - Mahathir (News Focus)  
by Mokhtar Hussain

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 19 (Bernama) — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad turns 65 tomorrow, only 11 days to the end of the year 1990 — a glorious year for Malaysia.

Reflecting on events the past year, his leadership can be said to be the most outstanding since becoming Prime Minister on July 16, 1981.

If during the early years of his leadership, he proved his abilities by introducing new concepts and ideas like the clock-in system, increased productivity, Look East Policy and the Proton Saga national car project, now, after almost 10 years, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir is proving that he is still as resolute and capable in facing challenges against his leadership.

The beginning of the year saw him launching +Visit Malaysia Year (VMY)+ to popularise Malaysia as a tourist destination in this region, a project which is also aimed at increasing the country's earnings.

He then showed his ability in international politics when Malaysia hosted the first summit of Group of 15 countries. Last October, Malaysia also hosted the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

Since then Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir won world recognition, respect and honour as a prominent third world leader. He was accorded the title +Hero of the Third World+ during a visit to Caracas, Venezuela. — more

♥19/12/13-34MST

CNS4577

R GE 19-12 00269 EA402

aae

1990 - Mahathir-2 Kuala Lumpur (News Focus)

But, the most meaningful success for him this year must certainly be the victory of the Barisan Nasional in the Oct 21 general election. The victory was very significant, especially for his leadership of Umno, as the polls showed the strength of Umno after the party went through a dark period in 1987 when it was declared unlawful by the court.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, knows no tiredness. Barely a year after a successful coronary by-pass operation, he was travelling the length and breadth of the country to explain to the people the government's policies and to rebut allegations made by the opposition.

Before Parliament was dissolved in September, the Prime Minister visited each of the states in Peninsular Malaysia at least three times — a measure of his determination.

Once asked by journalists about his health, he replied: +I am not worried over my health as my doctor is always with me.+ He was referring to his wife, Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah, who is always by his side.

The last general election was also the most keenly fought since 1969 as, for the first time, it saw the opposition political parties uniting under a single front organised by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, Parti Semangat 46 president.

Even that did not appear to pose worry to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir. In fact, rather +sportingly+, he invited a group of Commonwealth observers to observe the conduct of the general election. — more

CNS4578

R GE 19-12 00232 EA403

aae

1990 - Mahathir 3 Kuala Lumpur (News Focus)

At one juncture, the government doubted the impartiality of the group but he went ahead with the plan to invite the observers.

The challenge became more intense with the approach of the general election when Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS), led by Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan, quit Barisan Nasional, an action widely condemned as +back stabbing+.

Though initially shocked by the PBS move, the Prime Minister worked very hard to ensure victory for BN.

BN retained its two-thirds majority, winning 127 of the 180 Dewan Rakyat seats. However, it lost Kelantan to Pas and Semangat 46 while PBS, now in the opposition, maintained its hold in Sabah.

While in the thick of campaigning, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was faced with another challenging task — the problem of Malaysians stranded in Kuwait and Iraq after Iraqi troops invaded and occupied Kuwait in August.

But, due to the wisdom and the stature of the Prime Minister, the Iraqi government agreed to allow all Malaysians there to return home.

It became a matter of pride to the people of Malaysia as the Malaysians were among the first to be able to leave Iraq while the people of other countries had to flee across the desert into Jordan and Saudi Arabia. —  
ore

19/12/13-38MST

CNS4581

R GE 19-12 00213 EA404

aae

1990 - Mahathir 4 Kuala Lumpur (News Focus)

Other countries were impressed with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir so much so the Singapore government was thankful to Malaysia for its help in bringing back several Singapore citizens. Bangladesh too sought Malaysia's assistance to bring back thousands of its citizens stranded there.

After the general election, the Prime Minister faced another important agenda — the Umno general assembly. The assembly was important as it was the first time the election for party posts was being held since it was rehabilitated after the problems of 1987.

With the bitter affair of 1987 still a +haunting+ memory, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir reminded those contesting for the posts of vice-presidents and Supreme Council members not to form pacts or hold functions, like dinners, for purpose of lobbying in order not to cause disunity.

The candidates adhered to the directive and the party elections went on smoothly in a spirit of unity. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir and Encik Ghafar Baba were both returned unopposed as president and deputy president, respectively.

It was initially expected that a resolution on constitutional monarchy tabled at the assembly could spark a crisis between Umno and the Malay Rulers. — more

♥19/12/13-39MST

CNS4586

R GE 19-12 00145 EA405

aae

1990 - Mahathir 5 Kuala Lumpur (News Focus)

However, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, in his speech winding up the general assembly, discounted such a possibility when he gave a clear explanation on the true meaning of constitutional monarchy which all this while was vaguely understood by the people.

Umno emerged stronger and more matured from the assembly.

With the conclusion of the party's general assembly, there was speculation that Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir might not lead the nation for long. Some felt the three leaders elected as Umno vice-presidents -- Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid -- were among the possible successors.

But the Prime Minister said he would continue to lead as long as his services were needed and his health permitted it. -- more

♥19/12/13-53MST

CNS4587

R GE 19-12 00138 EA406

aae

1990 - Mahathir 6 Kuala Lumpur (News Focus)

The excellence of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir in 1990 did not end there. His determined support for justice at the international level was honoured by the visit of two important freedom fighters, Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader, Yasser Arafat, and South African nationalist leader, Nelson Mandela.

Under his leadership too, the nation's economy continued to be strong, weathering the Gulf crisis which affected many developed countries.

1990, without doubt, owes its excellence to the personal ability of the Prime Minister with the strong support of Deputy Prime Minister, Encik Ghafar and other members of the Cabinet.

What is important, however, is the confidence and support of the people towards the leadership of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir. -- Bernama

♥19/12/13-53MST