

Mahathir says Lee wanted to be M'sian PM
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Former premier Mahathir Mohamad said in his memoirs that Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew was unhappy with his "municipal role" at the helm of the city-state, and harboured ambitions to lead Malaysia.

In his latest broadside against Singapore's founding father, Mahathir, Malaysian premier from 1981 to 2003, said his bitter rival had wanted to take over Malaysia when the island-state was part of the Malaysian federation.

Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak merged with peninsula Malaysia to create the federation of Malaysia in 1963, but Singapore was ejected in 1965, following racial clashes and political and economic differences.

Lee remained Singaporean prime minister until 1990.

"Lee saw Malaysia as his chance to dominate a substantial nation and become its prime minister," Mahathir said in his 809-page *A Doctor In The House: The Memoirs of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad*, which hit bookshelves Tuesday.

"The Singapore of the early 1960s was too small for him and his ambitions.

"Malaysia was a real country, not a city-state and to become Prime Minister of Malaysia would satisfy his ambitions, especially for power and a more than municipal role," he wrote.

Mahathir said he had often clashed with Lee when Singapore was part of Malaysia, adding that Lee was "condescending" when addressing parliament.

"Lee and I had a civil relationship, but it was never a friendship," he said, adding that Lee had labelled him a Malay 'ultra' - or extremist - although he himself was one.

"Lee did not see himself as an extremist... when in commenting upon Malay poverty and its causes, he remarked that 'it is not the Malays themselves who are backward, just their culture.'"

A sleepy backwater trading port upon separation in 1965, Lee transformed Singapore into an economic powerhouse.

Its economy grew at 14.7 percent in 2010, doubling Malaysia's 7.2 percent.

Official figures show Singapore's GDP per capita had increased from 512 dollars in 1965 to 36,537 dollars in 2009, while Malaysia's GDP per capita lagged behind on 335 dollars in 1965 to 6,975 in 2009.

The two former leaders had failed to resolve rows over the price of the water that Malaysia supplies to resource-scarce Singapore and access for the city-state's military to Malaysian airspace.

Mahathir stepped down in 2003, at a time when relations between the two neighbours were

at a low. Ties have improved since Najib Razak took over from Mahathir's successor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in 2009.

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