

## **Marina Mahathir: Never thought dad would be PM**

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**By Norman Goh & Zikri Kamarulzaman**

With successful children and a comfortable life, former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad could probably celebrate his 90th birthday today with a big bash.

But neither that nor a proposal by his daughter Marina to hold an awards ceremony in his name, are what he wants.

"We were thinking what to do for his 90th birthday. Should we have a big do, should we do something else?"

"I was thinking of doing something that is more long lasting, not just a celebration but some sort of awards programme in his name but he just refused.

"He doesn't want to have anything in his name. 'Nothing in my name' he said," Marina told Malaysiakini in an exclusive interview Thursday.

Marina (right, with Mahathir) said that when asked how he wanted to celebrate his birthday, Mahathir simply replied: "A doa selamat (thanksgiving prayer ceremony) is just fine."

And that's exactly what he's getting - a breaking fast dinner and prayers with family, especially the 18 grandchildren who he dotes on.

"He actually likes being surrounded by family so we really made an effort to get all the grandchildren to come rather than just the older ones," Marina, the eldest of Mahathir's seven children, said.

Born in Alor Setar, Kedah in 1925, Mahathir rose from being one of the first Malay medical doctors in the state to one of the country's longest serving prime ministers, having been in office for 22 years.

### **Small town people, amazing parents**

Marina said those 22 years were like a dream to her, having never imagined that her father would achieve such heights.

"It wasn't something that was talked about at the dinner table [...] 'Oh, I want to be PM'. Never, really, never.

"We were very small town people so our imagination was not much beyond that small town. I remember as a small child thinking that Malaya was Alor Setar and that was it, not realising that it was much bigger," she said.

Her amazement at her father, and her mother Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali (left), 88, continues to this day.

"My parents for their age, they're quite amazing because they're so healthy and so alert. My mum, her eyesight is not so good but apart from that, I think they're really amazing.

"I really count my blessings because I see other people with parents who are younger than my parents but they're frail [...] but so far, Alhamdulillah, my parents are really on the go all the time," Marina said.

While declining to reveal what she plans to get as a birthday gift in order to keep it a surprise, she did share her wish for her father

"Mostly. I wish him good health, a long life, and lots of continued courage and dedication in all the things he's been doing, especially recently.

"But mostly good health," she said.

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