

Work hard and stay united: Omar

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KUALA LUMPUR: Tun Omar Ong Yoke Lin, who served in Malaysia's maiden cabinet, turned 90 yesterday.

The nonagenarian had this advice for the young in shaping Malaysia's future: "All the races must work hard and stay united."

The wheelchair-bound Omar, who spoke softly, was eager to share his views on several issues in his home in Persiaran Duta where top MCA leaders celebrated his birthday with his family members.

MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting led the party delegation comprising his deputy, Datuk Seri Chan Kong Choy, and vice-presidents Datuk Seri Dr Fong Chan Onn and Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek.

Asked how he got into politics, Omar said: "I was always interested in politics. It was in my blood, I think. I have always cherished the challenges within the Barisan Nasional (BN) framework.

"To achieve peace, progress and harmony in this country, all different ethnic groups in this country should come together under the framework of the BN to work out our common interest and to compromise where differences arise."

Omar has served as a member of pre and post-Merdeka cabinets in various capacities.

Asked what were his momentous moments, memories and his experience, Omar said: "In the pre-Merdeka cabinet, Tunku's Baling talks with Chin Peng who refused to lay down arms and continued to fight the government is momen-

tous. Also, the creation of the new villages, cutting off supplies to the communists in rural areas."

On the leadership styles and visions of the four prime ministers under who he served, Omar said: "Tunku Abdul Rahman was the right man at the right time because of his relaxed style. He was a prince with a common touch and that was very much needed to unite the various races to form a new nation.

"Tun Abdul Razak was also a great man for his time because he was the father of development. His great energy and foresight and management style set the pace for massive rural development and education. Felda is an example.

"Tun Hussein Onn was also a great man for his time because of his meticulous attention to details at a time when the country was undergoing massive rural development after the late Razak.

"Tun Dr Mahathir (Mohamad), of course, was the right man to propel Malaysia into the modern digital age. He is Malaysia's father of modernisation and a man whose dynamism changed the face of Malaysia from a third world country to a modern, vibrant economy."

"Although I never served under Datuk Seri Abdullah (Abdau) Badawi, I am confident he will carry the torch forward and bring Malaysia to greater heights."

Omar cut a birthday cake presented by MCA along with a peach-shaped pau signifying longevity.

Toh Puan Aishah sang Omar's favourite song by Perry Como *And I love you so*. She was joined by her daughter, daughters-in-law and guests.