

# Dr M saddened by Khir's death

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**PUTRAJAYA:** Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who was discharged from the National Heart Institute on Nov 14, said he feels fine and will not exert himself too much on his doctors' orders.

The former prime minister, however, said he felt sad by the passing of one of Malaysia's founding fathers and the first education minister, Tan Sri Mohd Khir Johari, 83.

"I am really saddened by his passing because I had known him for a very long time - from the time he was a teacher in my school," Dr Mahathir said yesterday at his office at the Perdana Leadership Foundation, of which he is the chairman.

He had suffered a mild heart attack on Nov 9 and was hospitalised at the heart centre.

It prompted him to forgo his appearance at the Umno general assembly last week and to cancel several overseas

trips, including to India and Japan.

He sent his son, Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir, to Mumbai to receive, on his behalf, the Mother Teresa Memorial International Award for Social Justice on Sunday.

Dr Mahathir said he came to his office at the foundation because he was feeling bored resting at home.

"I have been trying to do some writing at home. Now I do the writing here," said the country's former leader, who helmed the country for 22 years before stepping down in October 2003.

"I hope not to meet people although there have been requests," he added.

However, he took time to greet and take pictures with a visiting group of pupils from SK Permas Jaya, Johor Baru.

Regarding Khir, he said one of the fondest memories he had of his friend was that he (Dr Mahathir) had borrowed

the elder statesman's car on his wedding day in 1956 to get to the house of his bride (Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali).

"I had no car so I borrowed his," said Dr Mahathir, describing Khir as a very friendly and jovial character.

"He liked to tell jokes and people naturally liked him," added Dr Mahathir.

He said they were together in the Malay national movement Saberkas (*Sayang Akan Bangsa Ertinya Korban Apa Segala*), during the Japanese Occupation to fight for independence.

They were also together in the early days of the struggle against the British-sponsored Malayan Union.

Asked about Khir's greatest contribution to the nation, he said: "The early awakening of Malay interest in politics. He was a kind of pioneer in terms of Malay politics." — Bernama