

## HINTS OF FRUSTRATION

# DR M HASN'T CRACKED THE WHIP YET

**But when he does, everyone should sit up and listen**

PUTRAJAYA

**T**HERE were hints of frustration in his voice throughout the interview, his first with the *New Straits Times* since he came the prime minister the second time around last year.

We see him twiddling his



**FAUZIAH ISMAIL**

fingers. He frequently adjusts the right sleeve of the dark grey bush jacket he wore, to cover the black long-sleeved undershirt under it. Occasional-

ly, he flashes the trademark smirk.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad fielded 31 questions ranging from the economy to reforms and the civil service to corruption, Former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's name was mentioned a few times throughout the interview.

We were allotted 40 minutes. It stretched to about an hour. We suspect we could have gone on asking questions had his officer not stopped us. "Tun has a courtesy call," the officer said. If we are correct in our assessment of

the interview, it is easily understandable.

There is probably so much that Dr Mahathir wanted to achieve in the first year of his administration but could not possibly do as there are constraints in the government, financially or otherwise.

He could have it relatively "easy" when he became the country's fourth prime minister from 1981 to October 2003. He admitted to having a well-oiled government machinery in place. He had micro-managed as well.

But this time around, it does

seem that he has his work cut out for him, especially since the cabinet ministers are new. Some are young and inexperienced.

He did say changing them is not going to help at all. They need to know what their duties are.

It would definitely put a strain on the 93-year-old prime minister if he is to continue holding their hands as they go about doing their work in their respective ministries.

But we don't think that Dr Mahathir has cracked the whip yet. But when he does, everyone should sit up and listen.