

Govt to move forward after 1 year of 1MDB clean-up

The coalition finds the damage from 1MDB more extensive than expected, says Dr M

by NG MIN SHEN

AFTER spending the better part of its first year in power cleaning up "the mess created by 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB)," the Pakatan Harapan administration is finally ready to move forward, said Prime Minister (PM) Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said the coalition, which toppled 61 years of Barisan Nasional's rule during the 14th General Election (GEM) in May last year, found that the damage from 1MDB was more extensive than expected, while other economic pillars were also compromised.

"Nevertheless, much as it seems of what the new government inherited is to have its work cut out for it.

"I believe (that) we have turned the corner and we look forward to finally sit down and pursue our plans, instead of merely being tied down to mopping and cleaning up tasks," Dr Mahathir said at a luncheon hosted by the American Malaysian Chamber of Commerce in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

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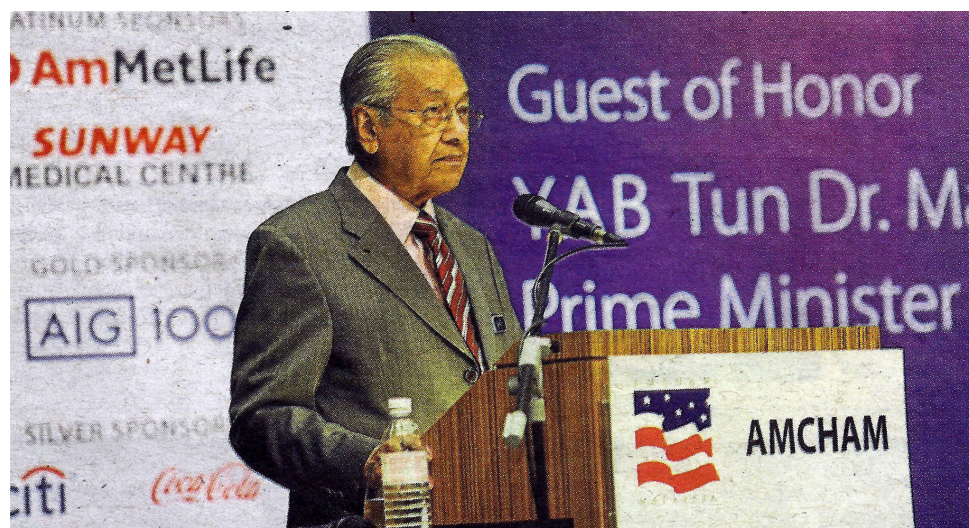
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Pic by Ismail Che Rus

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The 93-year-old statesman, who became PM for the second time after stepping down in 2003, also said he is happy with the performance of his Cabinet ministers although more time is required for them to fully step into their shoes.

"When we became the government, they still feel as if they're in the Opposition. For example, they are confused about having to be business-friendly. They used to be critical of government policies. Now, they have to be friendly with people.

"But I think in the short time that they've become ministers, they have proven they can actually adjust to a new environment. I think it may take a little more time before they feel comfortable," he said during a question-and-answer session at the luncheon.

In response to concerns on the strength of the country's leadership, the PM said the coalition has held itself to-

continue our engagements with multinationals like you.

"As we take your viewpoints into consideration, in turn, you will continue to view Malaysia as a favoured, strategic and profitable investment destination for US businesses now and in years to come," Dr Mahathir said.

According to reports from various government agencies, the US was Malaysia's third-largest trading partner globally in 2018, with total trade exceeding RM155 billion.

Meanwhile, the process of ratifying the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) is still on hold as certain ministries are not pleased with the potential outcome of the agreement.

"I sat down to discuss this matter with a number of officials from different ministries. Apparently, they are still not quite happy with what will happen if we join the CPTPP," the PM said.

drawn from it. It incorporates the original agreement, as well as the suspension of several provisions.

Dr Mahathir added that in Malaysia, there are certain policies in place aimed at equalising or reducing the disparity between different communities.

In another development, Dr Mahathir said there is no need for travel advisories against Malaysia as the country is a safe destination.

"There is no need for advisories against Malaysia. One or two terrorists have been caught but otherwise, we are a safe country. No American planes or companies fly to Malaysia. I have always wondered why...because we are nice people. Their investors come and we welcome them. Perhaps, the investors can tell American people that we are a safe country," he added.

The US State Department issued a travel advisory on April 9, under which 35 coun-