

Always ready to face challenges

The Star - 16/10/2019 PS-2

A man for all seasons, Dr M's resilience was built on life's many adversities

KUALA LUMPUR: Life is full of adversity and struggle and having to face it all at a young age has helped build the resilience of Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and made him what he is today – a statesman with strong willpower to face any challenge and a leader who is respected by the people at home and abroad.

When he was young, he was determined to ensure his and his family's survival and did not hesitate to take any job offer without paying too much attention to the salary.

Like any other young man, Dr Mahathir also had his fair share of being a victim of bullying.

Those are among the stories of his life which he shared with Hot FM radio deejays – Fizie, Shuib and Syuk – while being their guest in the Geng Pagi Hot segment

this morning.

Elaborating on his work experience, Dr Mahathir, 94, said after he graduated with a medical degree from Singapore, he entered the public service as a medical officer, earning only RM400 a month, before it was raised to RM770 following a promotion.

"I did not make my salary a priority. For me, it does not matter how big your salary is because what matters is your spirit to work. If you have that spirit, you will work better. If you are salary-motivated, your work performance will depend on how much money you get," he said.

Dr Mahathir said, during the Japanese occupation of Malaya, his family lost their source of income and he had to turn himself into a petty trader at Pekan Rabu.

"Actually, my first job was selling

fried banana and other sellable stuff at Pekan Rabu. During the Japanese occupation in 1943 and 1944, we were poor and had no job. I was not a doctor then.

"My family did not have any income because most civil servants were laid off. My brother's service was terminated, my father did not get his pension. So, I had to work," he said.

The Prime Minister said he believed that hard work and good moral compass would determine one's success.

"The success of an individual, a race or a nation depends on the values they hold on to. If they are hardworking, trustworthy and would feel ashamed if they failed, then they will be successful," he said.

On bullying, Dr Mahathir said he had his fair share of being a victim

when he tried to sell balloons at school.

"I bought three balloons for two sen. I sold it back at one sen each and made one sen profit. A 'friend' took me to the school canteen and I 'had to' buy a plate of rice for him. I was really scared of him. So yes, I was bullied once," he said.

On his passion for driving, Dr Mahathir said it began when he owned a convertible car during his college years in Singapore, and he loved driving it so much that he was willing to drive from Singapore to his hometown in Alor Setar, Kedah.

"Even though sometimes my feet would hurt from stepping on the pedals for too long, I still find driving enjoyable.

"The highest speed I have driven was 180kph, or maybe more. There was a time when the Maju Expressway was ready but not yet opened

to the public, so we had access to it and there were no other cars, so of course, I drove fast.

"But sometimes, when I am with my wife (Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali), I drive slower because she would constantly tell me not to go too fast," he said with a chuckle.

Between him and his wife, when asked who would sulk more, Dr Mahathir said he used to be the one who would sulk especially when she was late.

"I always want to be on time, I hate being late. So, when I'm ready and she's not, I get disappointed, but I cannot do anything about it.

"Now, I just have to accept the fact that she is going to be late, and that I just have to wait for her, no problem," he said, adding that he had 18 grandchildren whose names he sometimes could not remember.

— Bernama