

Frank insight into tumultuous times

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REVIEW
by Eddie Hoo

ANY way you cut it, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's latest book will draw praise as well as criticism.

Never one to mince his words, the former prime minister does not believe in populism.

In his own words, if the entire political system degenerates into populism, what you will have is moral collapse because you no longer can say "no".

He knows well that his book *Capturing Hope* will be met with cynicism and doubt as well as praise.

His first line in the preface says it: "This book is an account of my side of the story ..."

Mahathir feels duty-bound to speak up and right the wrongs he sees.

"Politicians and national leaders have a duty to debate and explain important public issues because the majority of ordinary folk aren't able to see very far ahead into the future," he wrote.

"Most see just the present because they have to deal with the concerns of their immediate surroundings. But having been in politics for over 80 years, I can see trends and I can deduce what will happen in the future more accurately than most other people who may simply be guessing." And that captures the essence of this book.

DAP stalwart Lim Kit Siang has said that it provides an invaluable insight into the past tumultuous decade.

Having stood on different sides of the political divide for the most part of their lives until the formation of Pakatan Harapan (PH), how the two key politicians in the country put aside their differences for a common good is dealt with in the book.

"I had been accused of practising cronyism, being a dictator and being corrupt - to the Opposition I was the devil incarnate, and some of them really did loathe me. So, when I was chosen by the coalition of Opposition parties as their chairman and candidate for prime minister in the 2018 general

election, I was shocked."

He went to great lengths to explain the difference between being a "pro-Malay" and an anti-everyone else.

"I have spent my entire life and career being 'pro-Malay'. If what people mean by that term is the dedication of time and energy towards helping the Malay community progress, then, yes, I am certainly pro-Malay. Being pro-Malay does not entail being anti-everyone else. However, there are those who desire to be seen as 'Malay-first' even ahead of being Malaysian."

Then there was Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, whose cooperation would have the making of strange bedfellows in politics.

"The most important thing was to defeat (Datuk Seri) Najib (Abdul Razak) at the election. To do so, I had to work with the Opposition. Anwar might stand in the way of any cooperation, so I decided it would be best to meet him to see if we could work together for a common purpose."

While Mahathir found Anwar accommodating in their first meeting in 18 years, the same could not be said for his former deputy's wife and daughter.

"Anwar was very friendly. We shook hands and I was invited to his room - he had a room in the court complex - and we were there for almost an hour. We talked like old friends, although of course we didn't talk about why he was jailed. I think he, too, realised that the only way to fight Najib was to work together."

"While he made the effort to be friendly, his family did not. His wife Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail was at first very antagonistic and his daughter Nurul Izzah Anwar was worse. Nurul will never forgive me."

With the political alliance with PKR and DAP secured, Mahathir's Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu) went on to alter history and topple the mighty Barisan Nasional.

Mahathir explained the need to topple Umno, a party which he served as president for 22 years.

"After I stepped down, Umno leaders began prioritising their own interests, or their families' interests, above everyone else's. Cash became king."

"What were the mistakes made by Umno leaders and members? The first was to consider Umno as a springboard for self-enrichment. Umno was only accepting new members who were not perceived to be a threat to the position of existing leaders."

He struck the right chord with the masses, especially urbanites, on the need for separation of powers among the legislative, the executive and the judicial branches of the government.

Central to PH's success in ousting BN was the 1MDB scandal.

"There was indeed something very rotten in the state of Malaysia, and we would all soon learn its name: 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB)."

Mahathir gives a concise account of what went down with 1MDB. What many have heard and read in bits and pieces is succinctly written in one chapter.

However, the sea change Mahathir sought extends beyond correcting the wrongs of current leaders, especially those in Umno.

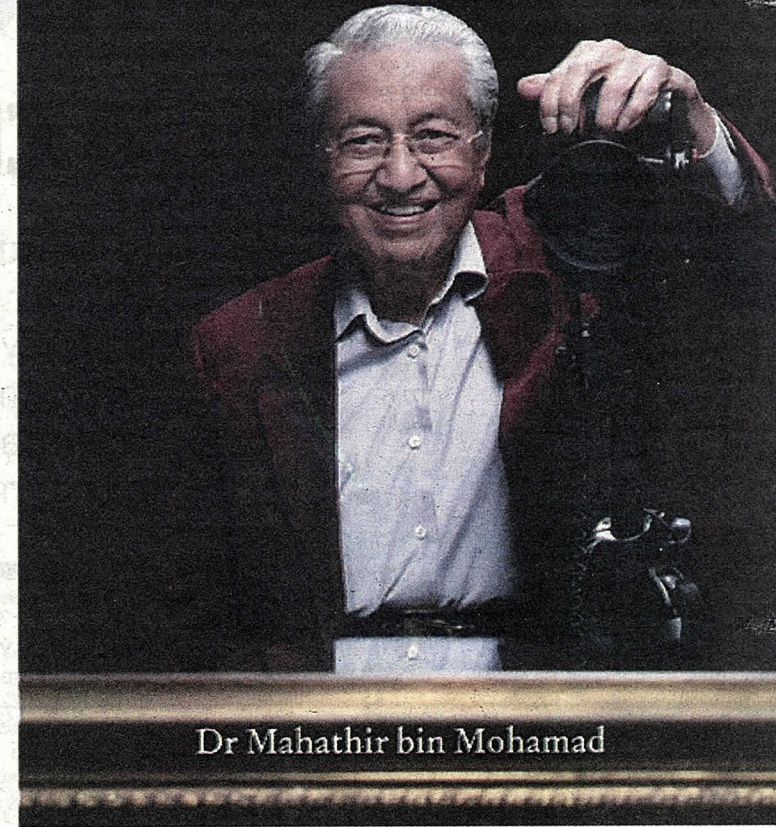
"I have talked about the need for honesty, and I'm rarely liked for it. It is fine, but if you are angry reading this at least consider that it is precisely this attitude and this fracture that has weakened so many Malays to the point that they are willing to believe whatever nonsense fed to them by politicians and religious ideologues."

"It has come to the point where some Malays have serious difficulty differentiating between truth and falsehood, and nowhere is this clearer in recent times than in the attitude towards Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak."

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CAPTURING HOPE

The Struggle Continues for a New Malaysia



Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad

"People go around saying 'Malu apa, bossku?' That is, 'Oh, my boss, what have you done to be ashamed of?' It is utterly mindboggling that fantasies like this are actually accepted by some people."

Beyond the current political imbroglio, Mahathir wrote about the need for assimilation and existing racial bias.

The best prognosis by the doctor is this: "The whole idea of a 'Malay-Muslim Government' is also a sham. The reality is that you cannot have such a government in Malaysia. You

must take into consideration that more than 30% of Malaysians are not Muslim."

The riveting part of the book is on the fall of PH, and he ended the chapter with a one-liner: "You can draw whatever conclusion you wish from that."

In conclusion, *Capturing Hope* gives you an insightful look at the goings-on in the corridors of power.

It is frank and positively what we need to read to understand what transpired in the country as it goes through a sea change.