

Still physically, mentally fit

Dr M: I'm grateful I can still work, speak, think and am not senile

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KUALA LUMPUR: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has spoken about his health, saying that he is grateful that he still can work and think.

The nonagenarian, who served twice as the Prime Minister, conceded that he is not strong like before because, at 99, his age does not allow him to do many of the things he once did in his younger years.

"I am grateful that I can still work, speak and think, and am not senile," he said in an interview with *Sinar Harian*, which was published yesterday.

Giving an update on his health following his treatment at the National Heart Institute (IJN), the doctor-turned-politician said his heart is not as strong as others' after having gone through two open heart surgeries.

He, however, prided himself on his speedy recovery after the two major operations.

"When I was admitted to the hospital, they attended to me efficiently, and I recovered to the point where I could work as usual," he said.

Asked about his aspirations as a 99-year-old, Dr Mahathir said it's



Sage advice: Dr Mahathir's advice to married couples is that there may come a time in their marriage when both parties must accept their differences and make adjustments.

no longer about himself but rather, about the nation.

"I want to see a developed Malaysia and I will strive towards this goal as long as I can.

"Once I'm gone, that's the end (of my role), but while I'm still alive, there's nothing more for myself. I've achieved everything.

"There's nothing more I seek personally, but the struggle for my race, country and religion still

drives me to continue working," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the lowest point in his life was during the Japanese Occupation because it was a time devoid of any opportunities.

The Kedah native recalled finding his own means by selling bananas and banana fritters in Pekan Rabu.

He had to do so because he had no opportunity to go to school, he said, but added that he would rather work hard than rely on his family.

"I strived to earn a living, even if it meant doing tough jobs like selling firewood. Whatever I could do, I did."

During the interview, Dr Mahathir, who has been married to Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali for 68 years, also dispensed marriage advice to couples.

"They may have married because the partner is a good person or because of feelings of love.

"But as time passes, the couple may start to realise moments or things that don't seem right about their partner, like a lack of tolerance or patience compared to themselves.

"At that point, both must accept their differences and make adjustments."

A stickler for punctuality, Dr Mahathir said he can't stand being late - a trait that's not shared by his wife.

"In the past, I would fight with her about that, but now I've accepted it as part of who she is," he said.

As to Malaysia's future leaders, the political stalwart hailed ex-health minister Khairy Jamaluddin, formerly with Umno, for his talents.

He also opined that PKR's Nurul Izzah Anwar, the eldest child of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, was excessively involved in politics and prioritised her family issues.

The veteran leader suggested that Nik Mohamad Abdul Nik Abdul Aziz, the son of the late Tan Sri Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, both of PAS, should become more involved in the current situation of the country, particularly on the west coast of the peninsula.

Although he was blunt about his son and former Kedah menteri besar Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir no longer having a place in that state's politics, he is optimistic about the latter's prospects.

"If he (Mukhriz) wants, he still can, as he is capable," said Dr Mahathir.