



# Trying times and events

## NST 31/10/2003 - 58 PRECISE

In the past, Umno was clean of money politics, it is not anymore now.

— On Malays continuing to indulge in negative activities, July 2001.

Mothers and women are the hope of the Malays. Our hope relies on them more than men.

— Making known his hopes on women, July 2001.



**WHAT A MACHINE:** Dr Mahathir waves from the Hovercraft Griffon 2000TDX (M) Mk11 of Britain. The demonstration session was held by British Royal Marine Commandos at the Mines Resort in 2000.

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to progress into a fully developed nation by that year.

The plan sketches the transformation of the country and its people economically, politically, socially, spiritually, psychologically and culturally, providing a shared and common goal to strive for.

It was a masterstroke of planning, which followed the tabling of the Second Outline Perspective Plan in Parliament on June 1991. The OPZ served as the operational frame of the National Development Policy. The NDP replaced the New Economic Policy, which was borne from the aftermath of the May 13, 1969 riots, and was aimed at distributing the national wealth more equitably among the various races.

In November 1991, Dr Mahathir opened the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition. This branch of his was to be held once every two years. It is aimed at developing the country's aerospace and maritime industries.

Twelve years and six editions later, Lima - which is also among his enduring legacies - has already been confirmed to continue in the future even after Dr Mahathir's departure as Prime Minister.

Despite his continued successes, Dr Mahathir has had to chart through some trying periods and events. Among them were the problems of the palace, the alleged assault on a hockey coach by the Sultan of Johor in November 1992.

It prompted a public outcry and the Government then moved to limit the legal immunity of the Rulers from being charged with criminal offences.

A special sitting of the Dewan Rakyat was called on Jan 18, where Dr Mahathir tabled the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 1993. The Bill was passed with more than a two-thirds majority.

Dr Mahathir said that unlawful actions by the Malay Rulers were not new, and that he had been patient in attempting to resolve the problems of the palace. The tabling of the Bill, added the Prime Minister, was because other efforts to reason with the Rulers had failed.

In 1997, meanwhile, Dr Mahathir set the foundation for Malaysia's concerted push into the age of Information and Communications Technology.

The Prime Minister set a National Information Technology Agenda to propel the country as a centre of excellence for multimedia technology, with the Multimedia Super Corridor and its flagship applications as a test bed.

But his biggest challenge was just around the corner. When the Asian economic downturn hit, Dr Mahathir was forced to abort his plans to retire.

Having fired his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, this period of time would be remembered as the greatest challenge, as Dr Mahathir strove to keep the nation's economy on course amid attempts to overthrow the Government through street demonstrations.

He was severely criticised for deciding to impose currency controls to curb offshore currency speculation in the ringgit and to regulate short-term capital flows, but he persisted.

On Sept 1, 1998, a day after Dr Mahathir announced the measures, Bank Negara fixed the value of the ringgit at RM3.80 to the US dollar. That rate remains until today.

Dr Mahathir was proven right. Some other countries which submitted to International Monetary Fund assistance were slower to recover than Malaysia.

Not only was the Prime Minister vindicated, his triumph in navigating the country out of the crisis would serve as among his finest hour, a testimony to the dedication and far-sightedness of one of the greatest leaders of Malaysia.

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PM, you've got mail

WOMEN of Malaysia will be able to e-mail Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to state their needs, suggestions and frustrations via the Internet.