

A big

thank you

to the people

S 31/10/2003 - 2 PRECISE

By MERGAWATI ZULFAKAR and SA'ODAH ELIAS

PUTRAJAYA: In his last press conference as Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he was leaving office feeling satisfied and happy with the appreciation and thank you shown by the people for his service.

He also thanked the people, civil servants, police, armed forces, Cabinet members and political parties for their co-operation in helping him to run the country throughout his 22 years in office.

"I want to thank all those who sent greetings and cards to me and my wife. I am not able to reply to them personally, so I hope this way I can thank all of them, including schools which have organised all kinds of activities to show their thanks and appreciation to me for my service.

"All this gave me the utmost satisfaction because to me, this is the best reward than anything else, the appreciation and thanks expressed by the people," he said.

The press conference which was held just hours before he handed over his duty to Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, started off rather subdued as he was trying to control his emotion but as the media started

asking questions, the Prime Minister gathered his composure. Also present was his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Ali.

He hoped the co-operation given to him would be extended to the new leadership led by Abdullah so that the country could be further developed for the prosperity of the people.

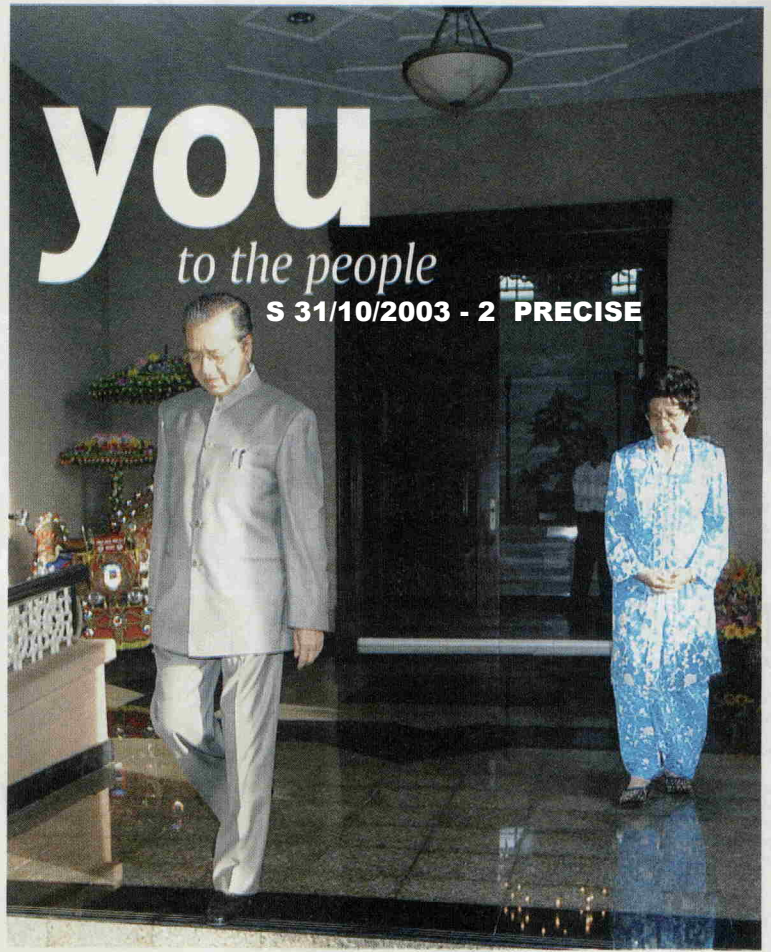
"I pray that the people will always live in peace and harmony as well as prosperity," he added.

The Prime Minister also said that a big burden had been lifted off his shoulders because he would not have to deal with requests which he could not meet.

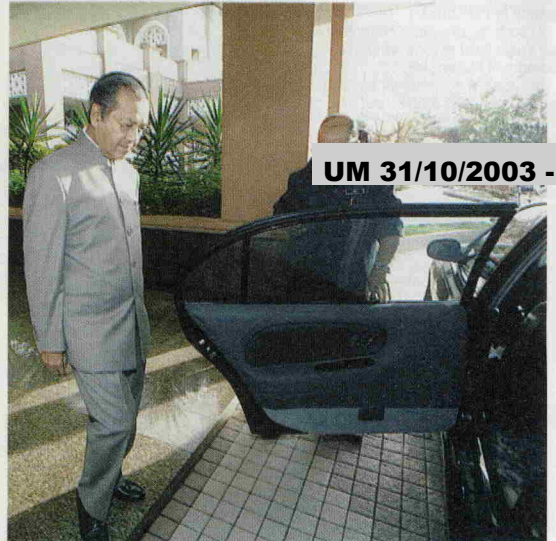
"I think a burden has been lifted because I will not have to deal with requests which I know I cannot help with, things that I cannot give which are not mine to give and the kind of pressure and demands made which I think will be wrong for me to do, all kind of things. At the moment I feel relief."

He said while he might not be fully satisfied - since there were many things that could have been done, he accepted the fact that he tried his best.

He also said he would leave for a vacation today and would try to put down in writing some of his experiences which might be useful to other people.



Dr Mahathir leaving Seri Perdana (top) and getting into his car (right) on his way to office on his last day as Prime Minister, while Dr Siti Hasmah looks on yesterday. He then met Abdullah and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsudin Osman at his office before resigning as Prime Minister. Pictures by Tara Sosrowardoyo.



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