

SERIBU WAJAH DR. MAHATHIR

S 31/10/2003 - 1-3 **PRECISE**



Significant moments

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'Thousand Faces of Dr M'

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By FARRIS BAHAROM

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad steps down as the Prime Minister today, ending a term of 22 years at the helm of a nation that is very reluctant to see him go.

The main reason so many Malaysians are finding it hard to say goodbye to our Dr M is that we have not quite finished thanking him.

These were the sentiments expressed by the visitors to "A Thousand Faces of Dr Mahathir: A Tribute to a Statesman", the photo exhibition spanning the premier's years in office.

The exhibition at the National Art Gallery

will continue until Dec 4. Viewing hours are from 9am to 5pm.

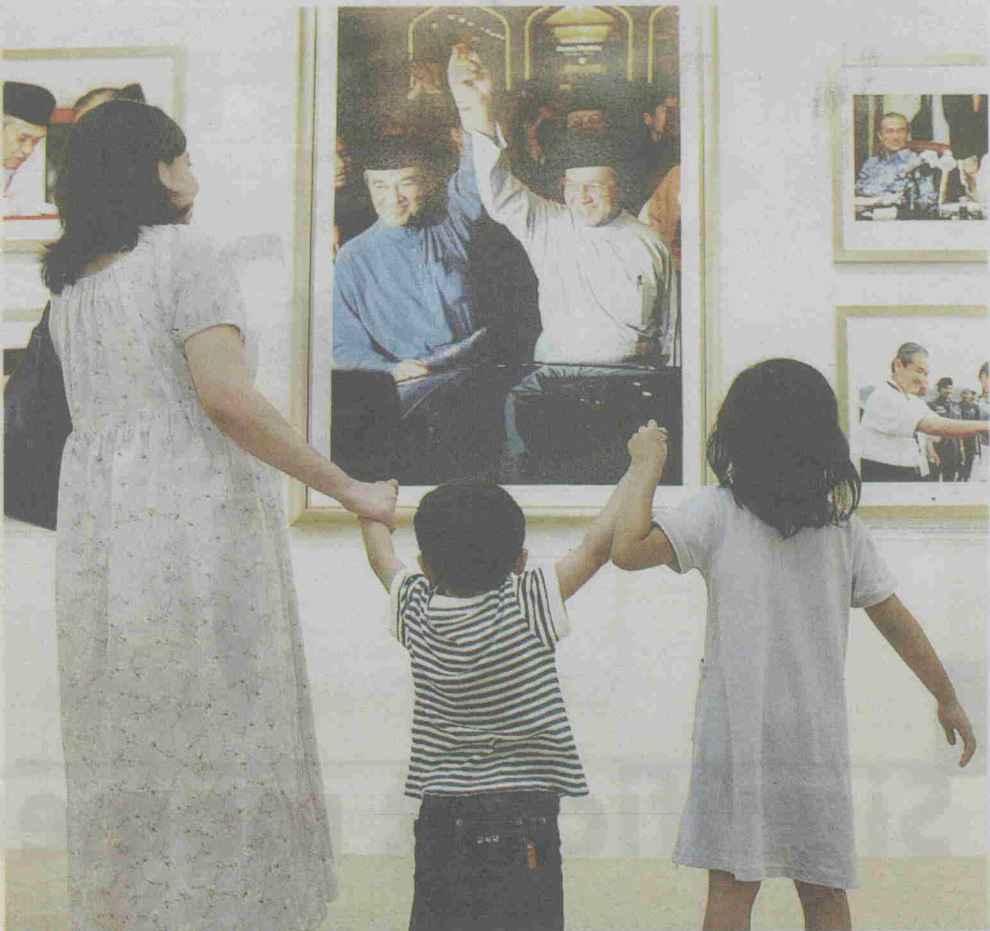
If he could have a brief moment face to face with Dr Mahathir, Azman Sulaiman, 34, would like to say "Thank you."

He clearly wished to say more, but could not find the exact phrase to suit the occasion.

As he perused the photos, Azman's expression was first pensive, then intense, in turns sad, then joyful.

To many Malaysians like Azman, the exhibition is particularly touching because every moment documented in these photos found a parallel in their lives.

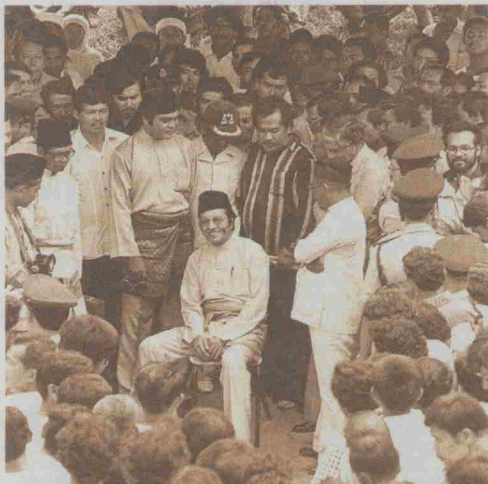
By extension, the PM's expressions on the



Above: Iza with her son and niece raising their hands in imitation of Dr Mahathir and his successor Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.
Top: A visitor observing the portrait collage of Dr Mahathir.

draws parents with young kids

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Above: Dr Mahathir surrounded by supporters in Alor Star on nomination day in the 1982 elections.

Right: The PM speaking his mind in the Dewan Rakyat.



walls are really our own.

His moments of pride were when we stood tallest, and at times when we were laid low, so his features were etched into a countenance of deepest sorrow.

Azman wants the PM to know that he is a brilliant leader.

His wife Alawiyah Md Ariffin, daughter Natasya, 12, and sons Azmirul, 11, five-year-old Azizul, and two-year-old Qayyum, were with him at the exhibition.

Azman was afraid that his children would grow up without knowing the man who helped make their lives better.

"I want them to know him," said Azman before continuing his walk down the hallway.

Others felt that the time had come for the PM to rest.

Cheah Choon Cheong, 50, said there was only so much that one can ask from the PM.

What he found especially moving was the PM's transition from a joking young man with sideburns and a cheery smile to a pensive, distinguished gentleman looking out the window.

Asked how he felt, he said he wished the PM was 50 like him, so he could serve for another 20 years.

He paused in front of a series of portraits of Dr Mahathir with the late Tunku Abdul Rahman.

"Sayang to say goodbye," said Cheah.

Some came alone to the exhibition, perhaps to have a quiet moment with the PM.

A few were so moved by the photos that they shed quiet tears in the halls, betrayed only by red eyes and brave smiles.

Wan Saudah Yusoff, 58, said Dr Mahathir was a man beyond compare.

"There will never be another Dr Mahathir," she said.

She, like most visitors to the gallery, came with the whole family in tow.

Her daughter Iza Shafinaz Mohamed, 28, walked hand-in-hand with her grandson Muhaimin Fathii, two, and her grandniece Siti Shakira Ahmad Shahrudin, five.

Iza felt the loss keenly, and like Azman, she wanted the children to remember the face of the man who had helped make Malaysia great.

They passed a portrait of the late Tun Hussein Onn raising Dr Mahathir's arm up high on the day he took over as Malaysia's Prime Minister in 1981.

Moments later they saw the same scene again, only this time it was a colour print and 22 years had lapsed. Now Dr Mahathir was poised raising the hand of his successor, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, high in the air.

In silent homage, mother, son and niece raised their arms in tribute.



The sportsman-side of the PM is seen here (above) during a horse ride with Sultan of Brunei, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, in Penang while a portrait (below) catches the man in a pensive mood.

Left: Dr Mahathir and his wife Dr Siti Hasmah Ali waving to the thousands who turned up during the Nation We Care event in Bukit Jalil to show their support for him.

