

with M.”

(The Mahathir family has a tradition of picking names beginning with M because, according to Dr Siti Hasmah, her late father-in-law felt a child with a name beginning with a letter in the middle of the alphabet would be best off during examinations, especially oral tests – he or she won't be called first nor last.)

Then there is all the juicy speculation about the overseas bank accounts....

“According to the Internet, we're supposed to have Swiss bank accounts with billions stashed away with our passport numbers listed – even that they can't get right, mind you. I remember that on the day they claimed my FD was maturing in the Bank of Israel, I sent out an SMS to my friends to say 'Eh, maturing already! I'll take you guys out for a kosher dinner.' At least I had a good laugh over that one.”

Post retirement

In the immediate future, Dr Siti Hasmah says they will need to organise themselves and begin a new life.

After that?

“He hasn't said anything,” says

Daddy's home

S 31/10/2003 - 49 PRECISE



Dr Mahathir loves the sea and was a boat-builder in his younger days. Perhaps he will now have the time to enjoy the sea breeze blowing in his face again in his retirement.

Mukhriz but all the children have a fair idea of what to expect – he will write his memoirs, as he has said in interviews, and continue to travel as he goes on speaking engagements.

Home will be the house in Mines

Resort City on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur and the one in Country Heights near Kajang.

Mazhar says Dr Mahathir likes the Mines house because it's windy and overlooks a lake.

“The location is good and it's

quiet. He likes to sit outside on the balcony and write.”

Idyllic as that sounds, nobody can imagine Dr Mahathir becoming a home bird.

“I bet he'll still be going around everywhere with his clipboard and sheets of A4 paper and black pen, making notes and writing away,” says Mazhar.

Opines Mukhriz: “He has to be waking up to something. The way I see it, vocal as he is now, there have been many occasions when he actually had to hold his tongue because he was still representing a country. Once he is no longer PM, he can really go all the way and speak his mind.”

Like Singapore's former Prime Minister and Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew?

“Maybe. But he'll be able to do all the things he couldn't because he was bound by the norms or rules as a head of a government. Now as an individual, he is still respected for what he stands for and he will be

able to act and speak accordingly. To me, it's a new horizon opening up for him.”

The children have actually teased their parents about the Great Unknown.

“I expect they will miss the support staff they have had; people doing everything for them,” says Mukhriz.

Marina is more merciless: “I've teased my dad about using the public phone and now for the first time, if he goes anywhere, he'll have to check in and go through immigration by himself. He has never done that and he has no idea how we normal people suffer.”

But for the children who had to make appointments to see their parents, what they all look forward to most is simply spending more time with them.

“We're getting our parents back,” says Mazhar, a sentiment repeated by his siblings.

Where they are concerned, life will go on, come what may.

Says Marina, “I shall carry on in exactly the same way but it'll be interesting to see people's reactions. If they act differently, then it's them who is making the difference, not me.”