

Mahathir always followed procedures

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Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tun Zahir Ismail

Whenever he spoke out on a certain idea, he would stick to it.

He was a good debater and gave very good replies in Parliament. Contrary to what some critics say about him subordinating the Parliament, to Executive rule, Dr Mahathir has always done whatever was required of him under the Federal Constitution.

For whatever motion, which requires parliamentary approval, he has always followed procedures to bring it to the House to be debated and passed by the MPs. It's true that Government Bills often get passed. But invariably, in any democracy, the majority party rules with the MPs supporting their party leadership.

For the 20 years that I have assumed the Chair, Dr Mahathir has always been open to my suggestions. He would listen to what I had to say, as the House Speaker, in my speeches and he would abide by my decisions.

Former Welfare Services Minister and Wanita Umno chief Tan Sri Aishah Ghani:

When I started as minister, there were only two of us women. But now, there are three plus numerous parliamentary secretaries, deputy ministers and MPs. There has been an increase of women candidates at every general election. We didn't even dare think that a woman could someday be appointed as Bank Negara governor, National Space Agency director-general or as Attorney-General. Dr Mahathir knows that women can play an important role in nation building, and gladly, we have proven his confidence in us.

The recognition for women is there, particularly with the establishment of the Women Affairs and Family Development Ministry. So much so, there's even talk from some quarters that maybe the men in the country would need a Men's Affairs Ministry, especially when there are such low numbers of male undergraduates in universities.

Political Scientist and non-governmental activist Dr Chandra Muzaffar:

As an NGO activist concerned about global issues, I would readily acknowledge that Dr Mahathir Mohamad has played an outstanding role in international politics.

Through an adroit mix of principle and pragmatism, Mahathir has succeeded to a great extent in defending Malaysia's independence and sovereignty.

The rapid expansion of the middle and working classes and enhanced social mobility are proof

of the economic progress accomplished under his stewardship. Add to these, the appreciable degree of inter-ethnic tolerance of the last two decades which in some measure is due to Mahathir's firm rejection of religious extremism and ethnic chauvinism.

However, there is also a downside to Mahathir's rule. Elite opulence has become more pronounced while the relative deprivation of a segment of the populace is more stark than before. Corruption persists as a major social scourge and public accountability has yet to emerge as the cornerstone of good governance.

Malaysian political culture as a whole remains trapped in its neo-feudal mould which discourages the honest evaluation of those at the helm of authority, and communal polarisation continues to challenge the nation.

Parti Keadilan Rakyat president Datin Seri Wan Azizah Wan Ismail:

The Prime Minister is firstly a man of paradox. He has built on what three PMs have done for nation-building before him, for a longer period than all three added together. There is visible legacy from the macro point of view such as, Twin Towers and Putrajaya, and also the uneven distribution of wealth. On the surface, Malaysia can be considered a successful developing country, but at the micro level, there are segments of society which benefit less and are at the fringes of our 'success' story.

I just attended last Sunday a double wedding in a slum area (Kg Abdullah Hukum) in the shadow of Big Valley Megamall – such a stark contrast, an example of the uneven development.

Megamall, a prosperous shopping mall, is barely a stone's throw from this area, which is crowded, with no drainage system, is prone to flash floods and the people who live there are the workers that help our country develop – Malaysians, not immigrant labour.

Secondly, the PM has given an opportunity to my husband to serve the nation and at the same time Anwar's (Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim) entry then was considered a political coup for PM that had help strengthen the ruling party.

Now things have changed, after a political fallout, Anwar is languishing in jail. The charges and court trials have been questioned and even rocked the credibility of our judiciary. The family felt the pressure especially at the height of the issue, but we have become more closely knit, faced the great odds together, and are anticipating Anwar's return to be a complete family again.