

**As honorary president of the Perdana Leadership Foundation, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad oversees the mammoth task of compiling the works of the nation's prime ministers. TEOH TEIK HOONG finds that the former Prime Minister's got his sleeves all rolled up for the job.**

**F**ORMER Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has been so busy tracking down the contributions of the country's prime ministers that his memoirs have taken a back seat:

"I am busy, very busy. I have less responsibility but more work now. I've only done 1% of the memoirs," he quipped at a special media briefing earlier this week.

This is understandable as Dr Mahathir, the honorary president of the two-year-old Perdana Leadership Foundation, spends a lot of his time spearheading the two-year-old foundation's work to research, document, disseminate and publicise the intellectual legacies of the country's past prime ministers.

Dr Mahathir stresses that the foundation was set up in honour of the country's past prime ministers and not merely to pay tribute to his 22-year tenure.

"The foundation is devoted to document the contributions, policies and successes of our past prime ministers, pre-Independence and also post-Independence. We would also be looking into the era of the Malay Sultanates and have all of these materials under one roof for the public, scholars and researchers to analyse," he said.

Dr Mahathir said many documents from the era of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein and Tun Hussein Onn existed but had never been collated on such a scale and collectively. "We are also collecting materials from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's tenure," he said.

"To do all this, we would need funds to sustain the momentum and efforts of the foundation. We hope to raise RM100mil which would be set up as an endowment fund to sustain our annual expenses.

"The first contribution from the private sector was utilised to purchase the land and erect the building we see today," he said.

The fundraising efforts, according to Dr Mahathir, would ensure no disruption to the foundation's effort to source for materials from within and outside the country, as well as provide avenue for more extensive research to be carried out.

"There is a great deal of interest in our national history, like how Tunku shaped our multi-racial society and what our country was like before independence.

"I have received invitations to many countries to share our experience and our success in race relations. The Japanese want to learn from us and the Koreans say, don't look East, look South," he added.

# In honour of our prime ministers

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- Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad



Dr Mahathir was quick to add that the foundation welcomes researchers and fellows from local and overseas universities to initiate research on specific subjects.

"We want people to compare our past prime ministers. Take for example, Tunku was pro-British, while Tun Razak opened the doors to communist China," he said.

He admitted that sourcing for materials would be difficult and time consuming as people who had such documents in their possession might not be willing to part with it.

"We will try our best to digitise all these documents and keep records of it. No time frame is set to achieve this as it will take time. Some documents might surface from time to time, thus the need to keep our search ongoing all the time," he added.

## With the future in mind

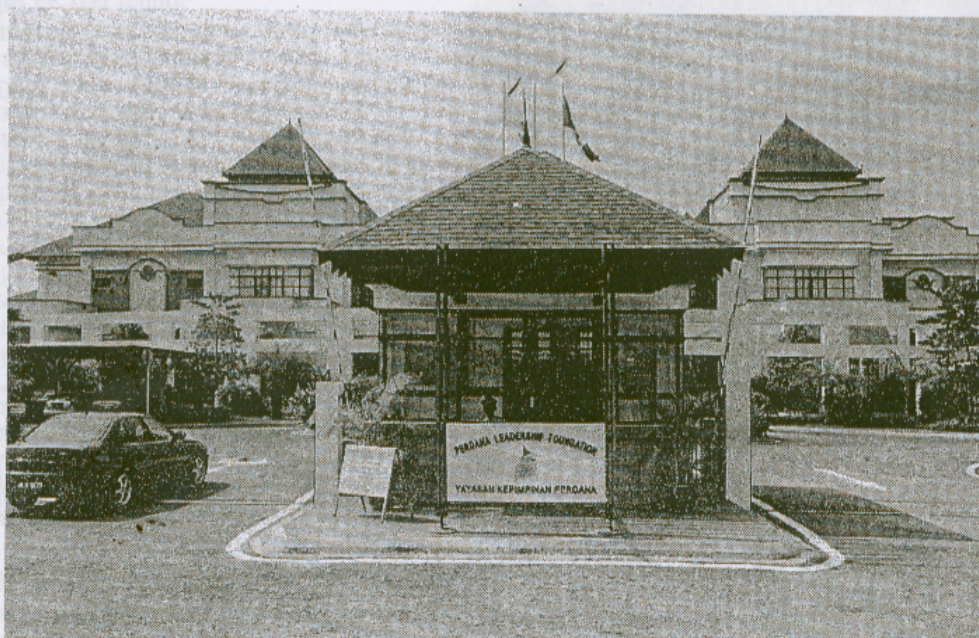
INCORPORATED as a public-private sector joint effort, the Perdana Leadership Foundation, to be officially launched in May, aims to create awareness of the development process of the nation and serve as a platform for future development through organised seminars, publications and programmes for schools as well.

It also serves as a resource centre for policies, strategies and initiatives adopted under the various prime ministers which may be used or adapted as models for the development of other nations.

The foundation operates a physical and electronic library, the Pustaka Perdana, which provides direct access to a wealth of information on the country's past prime ministers.

The physical library is open Mondays to Fridays (9am-4.30pm) and Saturdays (9am-12.30pm).

The foundation website can be accessed at <http://www.perdana.org.my> and can be contacted at 03-8885 8900.



The Perdana Leadership Foundation in Putrajaya is open to members of the public who want to learn more about the country's former prime ministers, policies in their tenure and various literature.