

# Mahathir placed Malaysia on world map: Anura

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PICTURE BY RENUKA ALWIS

Mahathir receives the Adams Peak award yesterday from MCSL Steering Committee President N. M. Ameen.

## Mahathir: Unity, co-operation and working together will help build strong country

by Anjana Gamage

Unity, co-operation and working together will assist to build a strong country. These qualities will also support the minority communities to live with each other in peace and harmony, said former Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, the architect of Malaysia's economic revolution.

Mahathir was presented the Adams Peak award yesterday by the Muslim Council of Sri Lanka (MCSL) at the Colombo Plaza amidst a large and distinguished gathering.

Asia's cricket hero and former cricket captain of Pakistan Imran Khan and High Commissioner for Malaysia in Sri Lanka Nazeera Husain were among the distinguished guests.

Dr. Mahathir said: "One per cent of Sri Lanka's Muslim population perished in the tsunami. But now this tragedy has led you to a lesson to live together and act together. All Muslims are brothers. Unfortunately most Muslims did not regard themselves as brothers. Over 4000 years ago, in the history of Islam, we had a division due to different groups who were known and claimed to be as Muslims. They were willing to kill each other. If we are truly brothers, we must not kill each other. Islam promotes non-violence. But at present, we have broken into small groups that is so antagonistic. Specially Muslims are now oppressed.

If they are united, they will not be oppressed. If you break up to so many groups; each one will be so weak and inactive too. If you tried to attain your personal interest, one will become inefficient. So it is important for minority groups to act 'together'. If you go back to the Islamic fundamental teachings, you

will realise that there is no difference. Islam is not against other religions. We should learn to tolerate each other. If you pursue in the right path; there will be no conflict between the majority and minority. However, I note in Sri Lanka, after the experience of tsunami all have come to work together".

Dr. Mahathir admitted that all these teachings were known by every one but no one was interested to put it in a practical way.

MCSL Steering Committee President N. M. Ameen and MCSL member Irudi Sulaiman also spoke.

"I don't think that I should advise your politicians. We have a strong government in Malaysia. People have supported the government. When there is a 2/3rd majority; the government is not thrown by anyone. So it is important to have a strong government. Then only you can work together, co-operate together as a group and administrate the country very well. If you are fighting with each other, both will lose and all will lose," Dr. Mahathir said replying to a question by an invitee.

Replying to a question on globalisation, Dr. Mahathir said: "Globalisation is not something new. It came from Europe to the far East through crossing the Red Sea by traders. But Europeans are different kind of traders.

They never tried to monopolise the trade. They have a different idea on colonisation. What is the guarantee they will give that we are not taking colonisation back?"

"We have to be very careful on globalisation. It is free movement of capital only of the rich. Globalisation should have free movements of people - why the capital?" he asked.

Former Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad placed Malaysia on the world map and gave Malaysians a new sense of pride, said Industries, Investment Promotion and Tourism Minister Anura Bandaranaike.

"For that, Your Excellency, we fellow Asians, are deeply grateful," the Minister said at the "Beyond Existing Frontiers" forum.

Dr. Mahathir Mohamad was the chief guest at the forum in Colombo. Excerpts of Bandaranaike's speech: "I am personally gratified that Your Excellency has, in some form or the other, accepted my invitation sent to you earlier this year, to address the business community of Sri Lanka.

Your Excellency is better known as the Father of 'Modern Malaysia', for the enormous role you have played in the development of your Nation, into a dynamic State.

A fan of Sherlock Holmes, as much as I am, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad was a Doctor of Medicine, while I took to History. He gave up medicine for a career in politics, making a name for himself as a radical with his book *The Malay Dilemma*, published in 1970.

He was elected Prime Minister in 1981 and held the post for 23 years, till 2004. During his tenure as Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir clearly emerged as one of the region's undisputed leaders, under whose visionary policies, Malaysia emerged as one of the most developed nations and modern countries of the South East Asian Region.

In the book *The Reflection - Mahathir Years* edited by Bridget Welsh, it says 'Malaysia today is merely un-recognisable, in comparison with 1981. The old Malaysia of tin-mining, Rubber tapping and paddy fields, has long since given way to urban, industrial and post-industrial prospects and problems. No one can take these achievements away from Malaysia and Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. There was nothing phony or un-economical about the labour shortages, generated by the rapid Malaysian industrialisation of the late 1980s and 1990s.

Dr. Mahathir gave leadership to Malaysia's drive for attracting foreign investment. He formulated policies and action plans, which, over the years, made Malaysia a hub for global investment. The giants of industry from the United States of America, Europe and Japan, soon established their manufacturing facilities in the various export processing zones in Malaysia.

Today, the most high-end prestigious brands in the automotive and electronics industries, are made in Malaysia and have found acceptance amongst the most discerning consumers of the world.

Under Dr. Mahathir's leadership, Malaysia emerged a major destination for global tourism, which has a wonderful mix of Asian hospitality and western professionalism. A visit to Genting Hills became a part of every tourist's itinerary. Dr

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Mahathir's economic policies focused on Mega-projects, amongst which was the much publicised Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

This heralded the advent of internet into Malaysia, offering promises of wider democratic space for dissenting news and information sources. The "Petronas Towers", described as the tallest structure in the world, became symbolic of Malaysia's regional supremacy.

In the mid 90s, the Asian Economic crisis hit the Malaysian economy. Blasting the adventurous and controversial George Soros and other international currency speculators, Dr. Mahathir soon put in place a series of economic reforms, which led to Malaysia's quick recovery and revival, while the rest of the region, was yet in the grips of depression.

Dr. Mahathir's crowning achievement was, his ability to maintain political stability, through his enlightened leadership of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), from 1981 onwards. He maintained an even-balance between the entrepreneurially strong Chinese minority and the less affluent Muslim Malay majority. While some may criticise Dr. Mahathir, as an Authoritarian, it was conversely his astute and strong unbending leadership, that has kept the fabric of Malaysia's Multi-faceted society un-tattered.

On foreign policy, the Mahathir record may be growing more positive, as the years roll on and Dr. Mahathir approached the world stage, full of sound and fury, magnifying Malaysia's small power status, by giving vent to Malaysia's deeply imbedded fears of being cheated or maltreated, simply because of being Malay.

Under Dr. Mahathir, the Nation of 23 million peoples succeeded in cutting a substantial figure. He championed the cause of the South against the North and sought access to markets while deploring any imposition of outside standards regarding Labour Regulation, Human Rights and the Environment. As he toured the world, he encouraged the cause of Malaysia and Islam's traditional values, whilst laying the groundwork, fervently, for a modern developed world of Investment and Technology.

Dr. Mahathir made one of his most passionate pleas, against the invasion of Iraq, who had no weapons of mass destruction or connections with the Taliban, which has been proved time and time again. Thousands have died and dying on a supposition of a super power and Dr. Mahathir has been proved right, though his voice was lost in a babble of war mongering; by those who were more hungry for Iraq's oil than human rights violations.

No introduction of Dr. Mahathir will be complete without a reference to the Islamic World and his Leadership role. The finest manifestation of Dr. Mahathir's role as a unique Muslim leader, was the speech he made at the opening of the 10th session of the Islamic Summit Conference on October 16 2003, which received a standing ovation from the 57 Islamic states at the OIC Summit.

Dr. Mahathir's speech was strong and controversial but most of it was about the need for reform and progress in the Muslim world. He talked against retaliatory acts of terrorism and violence. He stated Pausing and thinking calmly is not a waste of time, We have a need to make a strategic retreat and to calmly assess our situation. It is winning the struggle that is important, not angry retaliation, not revenge. It was the words of a true Statesman.

If 10 years from now, Dr. Mahathir's legacies or prosperity, and an independent foreign policy have endured, the double-decade rule of the intellectual, irascible, and charmingly simple, Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad may well be judged by history, to have been a singular success.

Although the future almost certainly will not be kind to Indonesia's Suharto and Philippine's Marcos, let us hope that the evolution of Dr. Mahathir's Malaysia will confirm positive contributions of this truly extraordinary political leader.

In conclusion, let me quote from Richard Nixon in *Leaders* (1984) and his description of President Charles de Gaulle of France, which I think is apt for Dr. Mahathir. I quote: "He was a stubborn, wilful, supremely self-confident man and yet at the same time enormously selfless. He was demanding not for himself, but for Malaysia. He lived simply but dreamed grandly."

Like a colossus, he strode the national and international stage, propounding the cause of Malaysia and much of the developing world, with passion, eloquence, vehemence and courage and all that tempered with a fierce independence.

You placed your nation on the world map, and gave your people a new sense of pride. For that, Your Excellency, we fellow Asians, are deeply grateful.

I wish you Your Excellency, a giant of modern Asian politics every success and happiness in your retirement and a wonderful stay in Sri Lanka".