

Mahathir still has time to return Malaysia to its tradition of liberal Islam

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An illusion of purity

Sf Bin - Malaysia

SUNANDA K. DATTA-RAY

You can get away in Malaysia by recalling that Tunku Abdul Rahman's mother was Thai but mention of Mahathir Mohamad's Indian father is strictly taboo. Nor are the imprisoned Anwar Ibrahim's Tamil antecedents or the Chinese ancestry of his wife, Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, the National Justice Party leader who says Sonia Gandhi is her role model, ever spoken of.

Ironically, from the first prime minister to the present incumbent, almost every architect of the Bangsa Melayu and *bumiputra* policies to accord political and economic primacy to Malays has himself been of mixed descent. The second paradox is that the very words *bangsa* and *bumiputra* (like hundreds more) contradict the illusion of genetic purity that shapes Malaysian politics. They reveal a cultural mix, especially a Hindu leavening, that makes Malaysia attractively relaxed and unique in the Islamic world.

With a bare 10 months before Mahathir steps down — if he sticks to his promise that is — after more than two decades in office, and Islamic extremism threatening to ravage society, the continued need for ethnic discrimination is being closely examined. Malaysia has made epochal progress under Mahathir. But senior politicians predict that globalization will necessitate a review and that though affirmative action served a purpose, "these privileges can't be expected to last forever". Even Mahathir sometimes speaks of Bangsa Malaysia, suggesting a common identity that takes precedence over the dubious notion of Bangsa Melayu on which everything still hinges.

Race is a beguiling myth in south-east Asia. Two handsome young men at a party whom I took to be Malays turned out to have Bengali surnames and a Chinese mother. I have since come across the term Chindian. Malays are that and much more. But demographic expediency has extended the *bumiputra* label beyond Indian Muslims to the tribes of Sarawak and Sabah. Many Chinese (26 per cent) and Indians (nine per cent) also question the validity of Bahasa (India again!) Melayu, holding that Bahasa Malaysia would be a more apt description for an eclectic tongue that has no script of its own, uses phonetic spelling — *stessen, kaunter, tiket* — to indigenize everyday English words, and is not the exclusive prerogative of Malays.

One day, perhaps, pragmatic arguments will prevail over fantasy and someone who is not a *bumiputra* become

prime minister. It might be the only way of arresting the tide of fanaticism reflected in the onward sweep of Parti Islam seMalaysia, the rise of *madrasahs* and of militant groups like Jemaah Islamiah and Kumpulan Militan Malaysia, with Pakistani and Afghan links. It would also be a worthy achievement for a nation whose history can be traced to Srivijaya glory.

Indian influence did not end there. An elderly Chinese recalls that he saw Nargis's *Mother India* no fewer than nine times in the Malayan *kampung* of his youth. But such tastes are frowned on today. Condemning the Hindi cinema's influence, the deceased poet, Usman Awang, winner of Malaysia's National Laureate award, deplored, "Even my small grandchildren know how to sing Hindustan (*sic*) songs like *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*."

The complex is strongest in Melaka (Malacca) and Kedah, both sites of early Hindu civilizations whose existence is vigorously denied or studiously ignored. Authority bestows approval on Parameswara, the Sumatran prince who ruled Temasek (Singapore) before crossing the straits to Melaka, only after he converted to Islam and became Iskandar Shah, ancestor of the *sultans* of Perak and Johore. He was a bad monarch for thirty-two years in Temasek, they say, but wondrously good as Melaka's sultan for eleven. But even as the paragon of Islamic piety, he called his laws the Hukum Kanun Melaka.

Kedah (Kadaram) on the Thai border, the first landfall of Indian navigators and ultimately incorporated in the Srivijaya empire, is Malaysia's richest architectural site. Describing the fourth century Hindu deities found in the Bujang Valley there, Anthony Spaeth wrote in *Time* that "the official literature does its best to downplay, even denigrate, the Indian impact on the region." The grudge-

ing admission that maritime trade led to Kedah's "Indianization" prompted Spaeth's conclusion that "an Indian Malaysian visiting the Bujang Valley might come away feeling demeaned rather than proud — and that would be no accident."

Thus is the past distorted to serve the present. Princes and politicians worship the rising sun. Iskander Shah sent tribute to the Ming emperors. Mahathir's 1982 Look East policy abolished Bahasa Inggeris from schools because Japan had flourished without English. Now, he has turned to booming China, setting a

target of half a million Chinese tourists for next year. India in decline ceased to count. But fresh economic ties, especially huge and lucrative highway projects, are being forged as India opens up to the world.

Eventually, this profitable new connection is bound to benefit Indian Malaysians who have the lowest share of Malaysia's corporate wealth: 1.5 per cent against 19.4 per cent for Malays and 38.5 per cent for the Chinese. Not surprisingly, Indians (85 per cent Tamil) claim the highest rate of infant mortality, illiteracy, gangsterism, domestic violence,

suicide and arrests. Some 15 per cent of the Indians in Kuala Lumpur are squatters. Astounding amidst such rapid progress, a small Indian community in Kedah was without electricity.

In contrast, the Chinese rode piggyback on the special favours meant for Malays to control commerce, manufacturing, construction, sophisticated banking and financial and capital services. Robert Kuok, the Hongkong-based tycoon, is Malaysian; so is Lim Goh Tong, the billionaire contractor who runs gambling casinos in Connecticut. Even the Chinese businessman, Heng Suan Lim, accused of match-fixing in the Bruce Grobbelar scandal, was

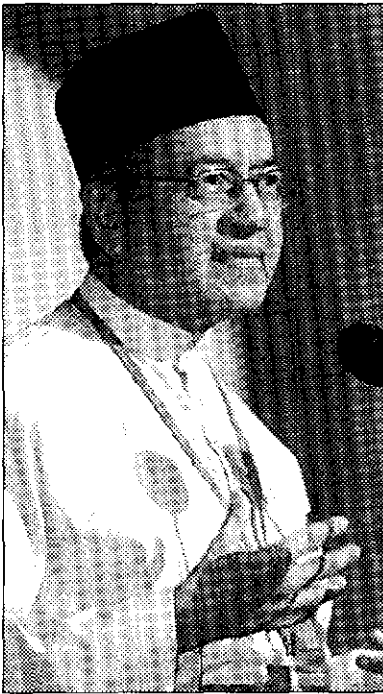
Malaysian. It is not only that the Chinese are more enterprising; they are also far better served by their political organizations and leaders.

Overlooking these internal contradictions, many Westerners see Malaysia as an ideal ballast for stability in an increasingly volatile region. Malaysia could fulfil that promise but only if it takes full advantage of the multi-racial, multi-cultural legacy with which it has been blessed. The contrary insistence on a mythic unitary culture encourages fundamentalism, with the Parti Islam which already governed Kelantan scoring a stunning victory in oil-rich Terengganu at the expense of Mahathir's Barisan Nasional coalition. The full horrors of hands being chopped off and people being stoned to death are being discussed, but, as in India, such is the crippling power of vote banks that Kuala Lumpur is unable — or unwilling — to take a public stand against state laws that violate the federal constitution.

Mahathir has turned a farming society into a prosperous trading community. He has built glittering highways, airports, dams, mass transit systems and the Twin Towers. The per capita income has soared from \$1,357 to \$4,305 without destroying Malay society's simple charm. His failure is that the government's primary education policy forced the three races to retreat into ghettos, 95 per cent of the Chinese attending Chinese language schools and 70 per cent of Indians going to Tamil schools. Malays favour *madrasahs* that are a breeding ground of fanaticism.

There are other straws in the wind of bigotry. A Malaysian friend declined a drink in my hotel bar because, he explained, the religious police swarmed everywhere, indistinguishable in civilian disguise. Young couples are constantly being charged with the offence of *khawlat*, or proximity. If this continues, Malaysia runs the danger of becoming the Saudi Arabia of southeast Asia.

America's war on terrorism is only one reason why a country with a rich past and a richer potential must be rescued from such a bleak future. Malaysia's own heritage provides the more compelling argument for rejecting the stampede into fundamentalism. Mahathir has begun to revise school policy, reinstate English, cut *madrasah* grants and clamp down on fundamentalist organizations. In the 10 months that remain, he must also revive the liberal Islam that is the Malay's birthright if Malaysia is to remain one nation emotionally instead of splintering into three.



Revival strategies

Malaysia 'monitoring' religious schools

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, NOV. 28. Even as the anti-terror vigil in some sensitive pockets of South-East Asia was stepped up, the Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, said today that his administration was monitoring the activities of religious schools in his country. This was being done in view of the perception that something other than religion was being taught in such schools in Malaysia, he underlined.

However, both Dr. Mahathir and the security authorities in the Philippines sought to downplay the terrorist threats in the region in the context of moves by a few countries to keep their diplomatic missions in Manila closed for the present in the wake of 'credible' information about the possibility of terrorist strikes in the region.

Australia as also Canada and the European Union were among those seeking to take precautionary steps in Manila. The Filipino authorities, especially the security-related officials, sounded a cautionary note that "undue alarm" should not be raised over the perceived terrorist threats in Manila and elsewhere in the Philippines.

A sense of confidence was exuded by the Filipino officials to underscore that the feared terrorist strikes might "not materialise". However, the Australian Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, noted that Canberra had to take into account the indications that efforts were under

way to foist "Taliban-style regimes" in some countries and pockets of South-East Asia.

The intelligence communities have been drawing attention to the suspected moves by the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), a South-East Asian outfit with an alleged allegiance to the Al-Qaeda. The JI's agenda is said to include the creation of a pan-regional Islamic super-state, consisting of Indonesia as also Malaysia and some segments of Thailand and the Philippines. The JI is suspected to have set its sights on Singapore too in this connection.

According to a prominent anti-terror expert in the region, the threat to South-East Asia might have now escalated as a direct result of the suspected 'decentralisation' of a 'fragmenting' Al-Qaeda.

While the Indonesian authorities arrested a few more suspects today in connection with the recent terrorist outrage in Bali, Dr. Mahathir sought to place the latest proactive action by the Malaysian authorities in a larger political perspective.

Dr. Mahathir said that there was no need for any alarm as the Malaysian authorities "have already taken action" against suspected militants.

According to an authentic version of Dr. Mahathir's comments in this regard at Putrajaya today, Malaysia had acted on the basis of information some of the local militants had gone to Pakistan as also Afghanistan in the past to learn the use of force for anti-government activities.

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THE HINDU

Mahathir against Australian role

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, OCT. 25. Malaysia on Thursday took serious exception to the suggestion that Australia could send its military personnel to the South East Asian countries to help them combat the growing terrorist menace.

The Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, said he would not at all accept the deployment of Australian troops for any anti-terror operation within South East Asia. Speaking to journalists outside Kuala Lumpur, Dr. Mahathir said that the presence of Australian forces at any place in the region might only provoke the terrorists into attacking Canberra's soldiers. "If they (the Australian military units are stationed in any place, they may become targets of the terrorists)", Dr. Mahathir said.

According to him, the peace that was now Malaysia's asset could be undermined if external military units were to seek an operational space in South East Asia in the ongoing international campaign against terrorism. Dr. Mahathir was responding to questions based on the reported willingness of the Australian Prime Minister to send his troops abroad for the global campaign against terrorism. However, there was no definitive indication at this stage that either the U.S. or any of its traditional allies might opt for a military solution to the gathering terrorist crisis in South East Asia.

25 OCT 2002

25 OCT 2002

'Asia must go for peace and growth'

AFTER the crisis of 1997 when Malaysia seemed to be on the brink of collapse, he managed to drag the country out of the abyss by clamping down on capital markets, revoking currency convertibility and coming down hard on political opponents. He was castigated in the global media for all this, but **Dato Seri Dr Mahathir Mohammad**, who calls himself a 'good dictator' remains unfazed by criticism, arguing that the 'guardian of Asian values' can't be corrupted by 'western democracy.' Back home, Mr Mohammad's regime has tightened screws on media independence, rewriting press laws and internal security legislation, banning newspapers sympathetic to the opposition and frequently taking copies of western magazines critical of the regime off kiosks. But despite western criticism, it is now acknowledged that Mr Mohammad's economic clamp-down did save Malaysia from the contagion and helped its economy recover faster than many Asian nations. However, economists like Paul Krugman, who said that capital controls were the best medicine to stop collapse but that these controls should be temporary, have been disappointed by Malaysia's inability to lift the restrictions once the crisis blew over. What is the future of Asia? How does he assess India's prospects? During his recent visit to India, Mr Mohammad spoke to **Diganta Saikia** about these issues. Excerpts:

The recent blasts in Bali seem to show that Indonesia is prey to fundamentalism. Is fundamentalism spreading in south east Asia?

The incidents of terrorism will affect our region as a whole. It shows that Malaysia is also susceptible to similar attacks. But we have long maintained a reputation for being able to handle and tackle terrorism. However, the flow of foreign direct investment, I believe, could be affected because of this sort of incidents. It is not true that one of the arrested suspects of the bombing incident is a Malaysian. He's an Indonesian with Malaysian citizenship. It is for Indonesia to take whatever action they want to take and we have nothing to do with that. But the moment he enters our country, we are going to arrest him.

During the crisis, you famously pegged the ringgit to the dollar. How successful has currency management been since?

Managing an economy is tougher than just fixing an interest rate. You can no longer solve economic problems by reducing or raising interest rates. Since the last war, prices of all essential commodities have been controlled by the government. The rate of inflation has very seldom risen by more than one per cent. On the other hand, look at Latin America, where every sort of economic management has been tried out, resulting in hyper-inflation. So, we've shown them that the brown-skinned guys don't need lessons from white-skinned ones on economic management. We've pegged our currency at 3.8 ringgit to a dollar. We've experienced a tremendous improvement in business after pegging the currency. Businessmen favour fixed exchange rates since it rules out activities like hedging, so there's no pressure from the business community to change the fixed rate.

How do you see China's entry into WTO? Could it be a threat to your businessmen?



(Smiles) We welcome it. Yes, now China has become a very strong competitor for south east Asian countries. China has been drawing many investors. But we see the competition in a positive light. China is a big market and Malaysia has products that can be sold to China. And remember, China can't produce things like palm oil, timber or very sophisticated electronics.

Where does India stand in relation to the Asean?

The meeting between Asean nations and India at Phnom Penh is going to be the beginning of greater cooperation between India and Asean. Asean is a cohesive group, notwithstanding problems within member countries. Some feel Asean is too aggressive, somebody else feels it shouldn't combine with northeast Asia. It is very important for the rest of Asia that in future India is part of our run to prosperity, it's very important that we run together. How do we do this? Many economists talk of the east Asian model of economic development. There are of course similarities in east Asia: we all have high levels of domestic savings, even though Malaysian and Chinese saving levels have been historically so high as to make high-saving Japanese look like spendthrifts. We all have an obsession with education, although the incredible drive that South Koreans and Taiwanese have about education make the rest of us look like education-averse delinquents...

Which way is Asia headed?

We should have no illusion about the possibility of a bleak future for Asia. The last few hundred years have been a period of shame for Asia. Our heads were bowed. For much of the time, we were on our knees. Our people were impoverished. Our technological prowess was pathetic, and our claim to civilisation

completely tenuous. Every nation in Asia, India included, has at one time or another over the last 50 years been written off as lost. We've been dismissed as basket cases, societies with no future. We have, for some time now, started to show the world what we can do. We could be at the start of a peace and prosperity run that could take us to the centre of human civilisation. We now have a historic opportunity to banish our period of shame and to put in its place an era of pride.

What should be the objectives for Asia in the years ahead?

In the years ahead, it is obvious that there are a thousand and one things that we must keep our eyes on. But we must aggressively and relentlessly focus on two fundamental objectives. One, we must build communities of durable peace and friendship in the years ahead. Two, we must ensure rapid and sustainable economic growth. And peace is where human progress begins. This is the first prerequisite. Let us never underestimate the central importance of peace, true peace which goes way beyond the mere absence of war. If in the years ahead we can't secure true peace and strengthen and sustain it, I believe we do not have a good chance of fulfilling the hopes and dreams of our people.

To achieve warm and durable peace, the first option is hegemony. The second is reliance on a military balance of power. The third is the option of community, of building regional relationships of reasonable mutual trust and reasonable mutual friendship, where no one is driven to rage, where cordiality takes the place of hate.

Let us be clear about the hegemonic approach to peace. It is true that nothing is as powerful as an idea whose time has come. But it is also true that nothing is as powerless as an idea whose time has gone. Hegemony and imperialism, like the doctrine of the divine right of kings and the 'mandate of heaven' are neither productive nor possible in today's world. The world today is too complicated and too democratic a place for imperialism to be a viable approach to true peace. It generates too much resentment and too much hate in too many hearts. 190 states with 6 billion people can be controlled. But a million or two people who can learn the rudiments of bomb-making over a weekend, can't be controlled as easily.

Remember, those who fail to read the writing on the wall will pay the price for their political illiteracy. If hegemony is not tenable, why not that trusty old blunderbuss, the balance of power, and its small variant, the balance of terror?

Many will say the third option, achieving peace through building trust, relaxing tensions, building friendships and goodwill, a sense of community and a community of interest in peace, is idealistic, difficult, laborious, demanding of patience and endless effort.

They are right. But in the right conditions, peace through community is much more realistic than hegemony and the balance of power system, which can never achieve true peace. And I believe that despite all the difficulties, it is still the most productive method for the creation of a warm and productive peace that is subservient to the welfare of the peoples of our nations.

malaysia slams U.N. report

Malaysia
KUALA LUMPUR, OCT. 18. Malaysia has protested to the United Nations about a report that links the Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad's Government to the Al-Qaeda terrorist network, reports said today. The Deputy Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, said excerpts from a book on Al-Qaeda that were included in a U.N. monitoring group's report contained untruths about Malaysia, the news reports said.

In the book, "Inside Al-Qaida: Global Network of Terror," Rohan Gunaratna, a research fellow at Scotland's University of St. Andrews, alleges that several Malaysian political groups have historical links with Muslim separatist groups in the Philippines, which in turn had ties with Al-Qaeda. Mr. Abdullah said the Government had lodged a formal protest with the United Nations for including excerpts from Mr. Gunaratna's book in a report to the Security Council. "We are angry and condemn this untruthful and irresponsible allegation which has been passed on as a fact and is now being utilised in a U.N. report," the *New Straits Times* newspaper quoted Mr. Abdullah as saying. — AP

INDO

Key Bali blasts suspect held

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

JAKARTA, Oct. 19. — Indonesian Police arrested terror suspect Abu Bakar Bashir, a senior officer said. Mr Bashir was formally arrested while in hospital in the city of Solo yesterday, director of criminal investigations Brigadier General Aryanto Sutadi said.

"As of now he has been formally arrested but he will remain in hospital until he is healthy enough," Brig. Gen. Sutadi said from the Central Java city. "After that we will detain him. He is now in police custody," he said.

Mr Bashir, a radical Muslim cleric, failed to answer summons to national police headquarters in Jakarta yesterday as he was taken ill.

Singapore and Malaysia have both accused Mr Bashir of terror links. Singapore says he is the spiritual leader of Jemaah Islamiyah, a Southeast Asian group suspected to be linked to bin Laden's Al-Qaida network.

Bashir was named a suspect in the church attacks, which left 19 people dead, after a team of Indonesian investigators returned from questioning Omar al-Faruq, an alleged al-Qaida operative in Southeast Asia who



IN UNISON: Indonesians join hands in prayer at a memorial service for the Bali blast victims at Kuta beach on Saturday. — AFP

was arrested in Indonesia and handed over turned over to the USA in June. Al-Faruq said Bashir had ordered the church bombings, and im-

plicated him in the activities of Jemaah Islamiyah, authorities said.

Brig. Gen. Sutadi said Mr Bashir was being guarded by police in hospital. "At the moment we can't question him because he is too weak," he said. The country's security minister told the press in Bali that Indonesia had to "respect and believe" Jemaah Islamiyah was part of "an international terror network".

Indonesian police said today they have questioned 67 Indonesians and foreigners over the Bali bombing but no one has yet been designated as a suspect. The figures were given by national police deputy spokesman Brigadier General Edward Aritonang, almost a week after the car bombing of two nightspots which killed at least 186 foreign tourists and locals. Police have been ordered to step up their hunt for another Indonesian cleric, known as Hambali, who has not been seen since December and has allegedly met bin Laden.

The suspicion is that an eight-man team led by a Yemeni arrived in the city of Semarang on 10 October and then escaped from Bali within hours of the attack.

Malaysian PM cautions against attack on Iraq

Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad said on Tuesday the possibility that Iraq is capable of a nuclear attack does not justify military action to oust President Saddam Hussein.



Mahathir

Mr Mahathir, who will arrive in India on Wednesday as part of a three-nation tour, told reporters on the sidelines of a conference on nuclear issues that "if you attack a country because of possibilities, then every country is going to get attacked". They should attack Israel, he added.

Mr Mahathir said there had been "no pressure on Israel to do away with nuclear weapons" in sharp contrast with Washington's demands on Iraq. Malaysia has repeatedly opposed unilateral US military action against Iraq, saying such a move would anger Muslims worldwide and could inspire fresh acts of terror.

However, he has urged Iraq to accept United Nations inspectors to certify that the country is not developing weapons of mass destruction.

In the meantime, Malaysian authorities have stepped up security at foreign embassies and tourist destinations in Kuala Lumpur to deter local militant Muslim groups from staging any attacks following the bombings in neighbouring Indonesia.

"In our country, we too have militant groups, but we have managed to control them," the police chief told reporters. "We don't want this incident in Bali to give them inspiration and trigger problems here."

Malaysia, a predominantly Muslim country, has in the past year arrested over 60 militants allegedly belonging to Jemaah Islamiyah, an organisations with links with Al Qaida.

Meanwhile, Mr Mahathir will leave Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday for talks with both Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

He is expected to address an India-Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) business summit and visit information technology initiatives in Hyderabad. Mr Mahathir will leave for Pakistan on Friday and hold talks with President Pervez Musharraf before leaving for Saudi Arabia on Saturday. Agencies

Still no word on Malaysia general election

The Straits Times/Asia News Network

SINGAPORE, July 19. - Malaysia's long-standing prime minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, still has not made any pronouncement as to whether he would hold the next general election before late 2004, when it is supposed to be held. Some quarters think he might do this in light of the faltering support for the fundamentalists.

Dr Mahathir would have retired by late 2004. His deputy, Mr Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, is scheduled to take over in October 2003.

Both parties campaigned fiercely for state assembly and national Parliament seats that fell vacant after the recent death of Fadzil Noor, the Islamic party's presi-

g. S. Asia - Malaysia Mahathir slams pro-fundamentalists

KUALA LUMPUR, July 19. - After winning a partial victory in a crucial by-election, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad blasted Malaysians today who voted for Islamic fundamentalists as "fanatics". The attack signalled rising enmity between his ruling United Malays National Organisation (Umno) and the opposition Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, which wants to declare the country a hardline Islamic state and has denounced Dr Mahathir and his allies as religious infidels. - The Straits Times/ANN

dent. In a nail-biting finish late yesterday, the fundamentalists, who had won the seat the fundamentalists retained the assembly seat in northern Kedah - Dr Mahathir's home state - by a narrow majority of 508 votes out of 16,215 cast.

But Dr Mahathir's party unexpectedly wrested the parliamentary seat with an even narrower margin - 283 votes out of 45,730. The result was a major upset for

split down the middle, but we have made progress," he told reporters. "It is not easy to convert fanatics - people who do not think or evaluate at all, but merely follow what their leaders tell them to do."

The Malaysian leader said the federal government would consider how to turn the tide further against the fundamentalists, whom he said twisted religious teachings and relied on slander to win support.

"I know, even if the opposition party puts up a stump of wood as their candidate, they might still win," Dr Mahathir said. "It is very disappointing that the voters should support people who are obviously showing disrespect to Islam."

The by-election yesterday was the first direct contest between the parties since 11 September.

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THE STRAITS TIMES

19 JUL 2002

Islamic party wins key by-poll in Malaysia

PENDANG (MALAYSIA), JULY 18. Muslim fundamentalists who want to declare a hard line Islamic state in Malaysia won a key by-election on Thursday, sending off a challenge from the Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad's ruling party.

The Pan-Malaysia Islamic Party retained the state assembly seat that came open upon the recent death of its leader, Fadzil Noor. Counting was still under

way for his vacant parliamentary seat. Mr. Mahathir's ruling United Malays National Organisation, which has presided over Malaysia becoming one of Asia's richest countries during his 21-year leadership, had hoped to wrest both seats on a sympathy vote from his announcement last month that he wants to retire. But the seats in rural Kedah — his home state — have become a stronghold of

the Islamic party in recent years, and sympathy among the predominantly Malay Muslim electorate was greater for Fadzil's party.

The result is unlikely to encourage Mr. Mahathir, 76, to call general elections before handing over power to his appointed successor, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, in October 2003. They are not due until November 2004.

Mr. Abdullah congratulated the fundamentalists, but noted their majority had been reduced since Fadzil won the seat in 1999 in the backlash against Mr. Mahathir's firing and jailing of his then-deputy, Anwar Ibrahim.

Mahfuz Omar, the fundamentalists' youth leader, claimed that the victory showed support for the harsh Islamic laws — including stoning to

death for adultery and amputations for theft — that the party has vowed to impose if it comes to power. "This win is an endorsement of support for the hudud laws that we are campaigning for," Mr. Mahfuz said. "This victory is a slap in UMNO's face, as they used money politics and abused the government facilities to thwart our Islamic struggle." — AP

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MALAYSIA / 'POLITICAL PRESSURE BEHIND DECISION' ✓ S & Anwar - Accusations -

Court upholds Anwar's conviction

KUALA LUMPUR, JULY 10. The former Malaysian deputy leader, Anwar Ibrahim, launched a tirade against Malaysia's top court and his nemesis, the Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, after losing his final appeal Wednesday against a conviction and six-year prison term for corruption.

The three-judge panel ruled unanimously against Mr. Anwar, who has long claimed that he was the victim of trumped-up charges to prevent him from challenging Mr. Mahathir, who has ruled Malaysia since 1981.

"We are satisfied that the errors complained of have not occasioned a substantial miscarriage of justice," said Chief Justice Mohamed Dzaiddin Abdullah. "We therefore dismiss the appeal." Mr.

Anwar rose from his wheelchair and lambasted the judges and Mr. Mahathir, who had groomed him as his successor, but fired him in 1998. The power struggle touched off the Southeast Asian country's biggest political crisis in years.

"The judiciary has been emasculated and bludgeoned into submission at the hands of Dr. Mahathir," Mr. Anwar said. "I wish Dr. Mahathir good luck. He has nothing left to destroy." There was no immediate comment from Mahathir. Rais Yatim, Malaysia's de facto Law Minister, denied that the judges had succumbed to political pressure. "These are baseless accusations," Mr. Rais said. "Everyone should abide by the ruling of the highest court in the land. It is as simple as that." However, the ruling produced an uproar from opposition leaders and Mr. Anwar's family, who alleged that the Federal Court had done Mr. Mahathir's bidding, an accusation government officials denied.



Nurul Izzah, daughter of Malaysia's former Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, reads a statement at the courthouse where her father was appearing in Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday. — Reuters

There was no immediate reaction from serving U.S. officials in Kuala Lumpur, but Washington — which has described Mr. Anwar as a political prisoner — had hoped that perceived injustices in Mr. Anwar's trials would be corrected in the appeals process. About 300 demonstrators outside the courthouse shouted the "Reformasi!" slogan for political change that marked Mr. Anwar's failed challenge to Mr. Mahathir, whom he accused of being a dictator and running a corrupt state. One man was arrested.

The crowd marched to a police station and lodged a legal complaint demanding a

probe into their allegations that the chief justice had rejected the appeal to further his career.

The corruption case hinged on whether Mr. Anwar abused his power in 1997 to get police to obtain forced retractions from people who accused him of sodomy and adultery.

Even if the conviction had been overturned, Mr. Anwar faces nine years in prison for a separate sodomy offence. Appeals in that case have not begun. He will be banned from politics for five years after leaving prison. — AP

THE HINDI

11 JUL 2002

AN EXIT STRATEGY

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MALAYSIA'S PRIME MINISTER, Mahathir Mohamad, has sought to leave an indelible imprint on his country's politics even in the manner of announcing his prospective retirement from centre stage. As he has already shaped Malaysia's political evolution and economic growth with a sure touch for over two decades, Dr. Mahathir will be remembered as much for his authoritarian style and autonomous policies as for his fierce pursuit of the national interest itself even in the face of stiff opposition from the major powers now and then. It is against this background that the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) — the political party that he moulded in his image — has now found itself gasping for breath as he bade a tearful farewell. His eventful tenure as Prime Minister, the longest by any elected leader in Asia at this point, is the reward for his successful stewardship of the UMNO during and between general elections. This aspect, more than any other, explains the high political drama that marks his decision to reverse his retirement plan and to stay on as Prime Minister as also the party leader for another 16 months from now. Yet, even as he bowed to the wishes of his lieutenants in the party and agreed to wave a slow goodbye that might last over a year, Dr. Mahathir has not made a mockery of his exit strategy. Given his substantial standing on the international scene at this moment, there has hardly been any serious comment designed to debunk his exit gesture as a theatrical absurdity.

In essence, Dr. Mahathir has undeniably put Malaysia through its paces and created a memorable phase in its development, one which will surely be recorded as the Mahathir era. His willingness to bow out of office in a slow political cameo, which has in fact begun to take shape at this time, is seen by his friends and critics alike as the response of a veteran leader to the present mood in his party. However, he has not always been able to feel the

S. K. Mubomi ✓

pulse of the Malaysian people with the highest measure of accuracy. Quite illustrative of his almost cyclical difficulties in reading the people's mind is the story of how he has had to choose and change his heirs-apparent or Deputy Prime Ministers. The most striking event in this regard is that of the international outcry that attended his dismissal of Anwar Ibrahim, an Islamist-turned-reformist, from the post of Deputy Prime Minister in 1998. Dr. Mahathir today appears to have not only contained the domestic political unrest that the Anwar episode had sparked but also regained in a substantive manner the confidence of Malaysians themselves as also that of the international community. The reason is that he is a consummate strategist who has earned the reputation of being a "thinking politician".

From the time Dr. Mahathir won the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding over a decade ago to the time he challenged the West on its own turf of economic globalisation in the second half of the 1990s, the Malaysian leader exuded much political courage. At home too, Dr. Mahathir is well known for the manner in which he paved the way for participatory governance by the majority community of Malays. In doing so, he has certainly sought to keep the key minorities of ethnic Chinese and Malaysian-Indians in good humour. Even while addressing the inevitable twists and turns of such a delicate process with a hands-on approach, he often underlined the importance of sustaining Malaysia as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society with a moderate core of cosmopolitan Islam. This accounts for Dr. Mahathir's status as a key leader of today's global campaign against political terrorism. Overall, his place in contemporary history will be determined by how well he can oversee the prospective transition in Malaysia itself while promoting the national-interest economy as a model even in a 'global' society.

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Malaysia hails PM move to bow out

REUTERS
KUALA LUMPUR, JUNE 26

MALAYSIA'S media greeted the official word of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's decision to hand over power to his deputy with surprise and praise on Wednesday, lionising the man that has ruled the country for 21 years.

Four days after Mahathir stunned the ruling party with his resignation — an offer withdrawn after followers persuaded him to adopt a more calculated retirement — newspapers digested the succession

plan for the 76-year-old leader.

Some were still debating whether Mahathir really had put a cap on his rule and intended handing over to his deputy, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, by October next year.

"Did you really think Dr Mahathir was joking?" asked columnist Rahman Rashid in the generally government-friendly *New Straits Times*.

Far from causing political ripples, Rehman suggested Mahathir's resignation was more akin to a giant boulder being thrown into a pond.

And Abdullah Ahmad, Group-Editor-in-Chief of the New Straits Times Group and

someone with regular access to Mahathir, confessed to having been caught on his departure. "I must admit now that I was wrong," he said in a commentary. "I had thought, and said so repeatedly, that the PM would die in office."

Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Opposition leader and wife of jailed former deputy PM Anwar Ibrahim, issued a statement urging Abdullah to improve basic democratic freedoms and governance standards.

For Mahathir's successor, choosing a new deputy would be the trick, said Abdullah Ahmad. "He will have his hardest job when the time comes to

pick his deputy. Perhaps it will be alright if hierarchy is scrupulously adhered to.

Utusan Malaysia, the leading Malay-language daily, chided those who had agitated for Mahathir to go but have since changed their tune.

"For the past few years, there has been no let-up in criticisms and lies levelled at Dr Mahathir as if those people wanted to see him go," it said in an editorial.

"But when Dr M Dropped the bombshell, many who hated him now supported him. We hope this transition period will bring good to the nation," it said.



Deputy PM Abdullah Ahmad Badawi with PM Mahathir Mohamad

Mahathir to step down next year

FROM SIMON CAMERON-MOORE

Kuala Lumpur, June 25 (Reuters) - Malaysia's ruling party said today Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, one of Asia's longest-serving leaders, will hand power to his deputy

late next year in a move investors praised as an orderly transition.

But politicians in neighbouring countries fretted over the potential for instability in Muslim-majority Malaysia and said a smooth succession was paramount in a region coping with political uncertainty in Indonesia and the threat of Islamic extremism.

The party said Mahathir, 76, a shrewd politician who has presided over 21 years of immense change, had agreed to postpone his retirement plans to ensure a smooth transfer of power and responsibilities to deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"All these things about lame duck is in your mind. During the transition the status of Dr Mahathir as Prime Minister should be preserved," Abdullah said after a party leadership meeting.

The departure of Mahathir, who tearfully announced his resignation on Saturday on live television, was always bound to cause jitters among investors in a region familiar with political upheaval, but financial market reaction was relatively positive.

Malaysia remains one of the most prosperous and stable countries in southeast Asia, and Abdullah is regarded as a mature and pragmatic politician even if he does not possess Mahathir's visionary and steely qualities, analysts said.

Speaking after a meeting of leaders of the governing United Malays National Organisation (Umno), Abdullah told a televised news conference the date of the next general election had not been discussed.

A new national poll need not be held until 2004, and the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition appears well set to build on a two-thirds majority as the Islamic opposition has faltered since the September 11 attacks on the US.

Abdullah said Mahathir's position was in no way diminished and he would keep the finance ministry portfolio for the rest of



Mahathir Mohamad (right) with deputy Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in Kuala Lumpur. (AFP)

his tenure. "There is no question that during the transition I will steal the limelight from him, that should not be the case," said Abdullah, who has a reputation as Malaysian politics' nice guy.

Umno secretary general Khalil Yaakob said the party leadership had accepted Mahathir's offer to defer his resignation, saying Abdullah will take over after a summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in October 2003.

THE TELEGRAPH

26 JUN 2002

Mahathir flip-flop sets transition clock ticking

Kuala Lumpur, June 23 (Reuters) Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's retraction of his shock resignation yesterday was only to give other party leaders time to work out the transition of power, a senior ruling party source said.

Asia's longest serving leader believed the time was right to step down after 21 years in power and he go through with his resignation, the source in the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) said.

In an extraordinary weekend, the leader of the main Islamic opposition died and his successor is to be a religious firebrand who denounces Mahathir for keeping mostly-Muslim Malaysia secular.

Mahathir is seen as a pro-

gressive Muslim leader and a bulwark against headline Islamists in a country where Muslims are only narrowly in the majority. Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will now have to fulfil that role, as he will certainly take over the premiership at some point soon, said the UMNO source, who asked not to be named. The only question is when.

"That seems to be the position as we're hearing it too," one western diplomat said.

The 76-year-old Mahathir flew to Italy today for a 10-day holiday after a meeting with other UMNO leaders.

The ruling Barisan Nasional coalition, meanwhile, was to hold a supreme council meeting to clarify the political situation,

the official Bernama news agency said. Bernama said Abdullah had told reporters that the meeting would take place "as soon as possible" so as to allay any confusion about yesterday's events. A sobbing Mahathir rocked the UMNO general assembly yesterday by announcing he was quitting all party and coalition posts. The speech was carried live on national television.

Within an hour Abdullah and other party leaders had talked him into staying on, but sources say Mahathir told them privately he was adamant he would hand over power.

Analysts said Mahathir would not have resigned unless he was sure that Malaysia would not suffer the chaos seen in the Philippines and Indonesia when

their strongman leaders, Ferdinand Marcos and Suharto, fell from power. Diplomats said they were puzzled why Mahathir had resigned and then retracted if he really intended to go. It would appear a messy way of bowing out for one of Asia's wildest politicians. People who know Mahathir say he seemed to have planned it alone, but emotion got the better of him at the crucial moment. "I think the reason is he didn't have the benefit of advice, even from his siblings. He was afraid to ask anyone in case it would just leak out," commented an old Cabinet colleague.

"He was so emotional that when he started crying there was a chain reaction through the assembly," he said.

For all the confusion, ana-

lysts, diplomats and fellow UMNO officials said Mahathir's timing looked good.

He has made an extraordinary comeback both at home and abroad since the September 11 attacks on the US.

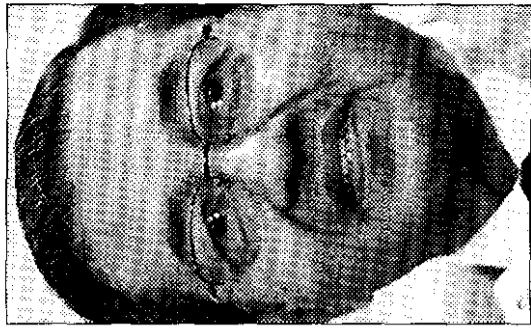
Internationally a reputation sullied by the sacking and jailing of Anwar Ibrahim, his former deputy, has been restored.

He recently visited the White House and the Vatican, as the West warmed to a rare strong moderate voice in the Muslim world. UMNO sources said Mahathir was determined to go out on a high note after delivering the country from the economic abyss of the 1997/98 Asian crisis and UMNO from its disastrous showing in the 1999 election. Analysts agreed. "If he is leaving,

he's going on a high having effectively recouped himself from the catastrophe of 1999," political commentator Karim Raslan said.

That was when UMNO won less than half of the Malay vote in the wake of Anwar's dismissal. Anwar is serving 15 years for sex and corruption charges he says were cooked up after he challenged Mahathir's leadership in 1998.

One of his sons, Mokhzani Mahathir, dismissed talk that his father's resignation was a stunt, that he sought to strengthen his grip on the party to push through reforms ethnic Malays would find hard to swallow after years of special privileges to help them compete against the ethnic Chinese who dominate business.



Mahathir Mohamad

THE TELEGRAPH

24 JUN 2001

19-14
23/6
S. S. Asia - Malaysia ✓

Mahathir briefly shocks his nation

KUALA LUMPUR, JUNE 22. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, shocked his country on Saturday by announcing he was stepping down from leading his party and governing coalition, but reversed himself and withdrew the resignations after weeping supporters begged him to stay.

The political theatre, played out in a televised broadcast, whipsawed the emotions of the nation and of the 2,000 delegates to the annual party congress of the ruling United Malays National Organisation. The Islamic fundamentalist opposition, Dr. Mahathir's target in elections that loyalists are urging him to call early next year, dismissed the moves as political grandstanding. Dr. Mahathir said he was step-



Malaysians carry a placard and chant slogans at the United Malays National Organisation headquarters in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday. — AP

ping down as leader of the party and the governing National Front coalition, but couldn't say

more before disbelieving supporters mobbed the podium. The National Front chairman

has traditionally been Malaysia's Prime Minister, but Dr. Mahathir did not specifically say he was quitting the premiership. Officials indicated that he had also planned to announce his resignation as Prime Minister, a post he had held for 21 years and, in the eyes of many Malaysians, no one else can fill. Delegates shouted, "Long live Mahathir!" while the Deputy Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, announced that Dr. Mahathir had decided to stay.

"I hope all UMNO members and members of the National Front remain calm and understand that Dr. Mahathir is still the Prime Minister," said the president and chairman of the National Front, Dr. Abdullah said. — AP

Harder than playing Bach on a

*Emerald cool we may be
As water in cupped hands
But oh that we might be
As splinters of glass
In cupped hands.*
— Aung San Suu Kyi in 1990,
on receiving the Sakharov
Prize for Freedom of
Thought.

The Lady, as friends and foes refer to her, does look like cool water covering splinters of glass. "Pictures don't capture special aura. She was wearing *ngyi*, the traditional Burmese long, which hugged her hips and her slender figure a sinuous curve. A sprig of yellow flowers gleamed from the bun at the nape of her neck. Though only five feet tall, she possessed a commanding presence," wrote *Vanity Fair* in 1995.

Her journey from devoted wife and mother to vibrant politician is a story of personal tragedy, humiliation, incarceration and the fight against fear that can be rivalled only by the world's living legend, Nelson Mandela. Aung San Suu Kyi inspired a Hollywood film, *The Lady*, in 1995 when the world largely was unaware of the horrors there. As the film's director said, "For most of the world, it was as if it did not exist."

In March 1988, as a fellow of the Indian Institute of International Studies, she returned to Burma to attend to her ailing father, Daw Khin Kyi. Four months later, pro-democracy movements rocked the country. The military dictator General Ne Win stepped down as chairman of the Burma Socialist Programme after 26 years. The military stepped down on the swelling protests. On 8 August, they fired on unarmed protesters, from students to monks, killing over 100. Around 700,000 fled across borders. Ironically, this preceded the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre where, for fight-

ing for a similar cause, a lesser number were killed by the Chinese army.

On 26 August, she addressed a rally in front of Rangoon's famous Shwedagon Pagoda. Half a million listened to her. To most, she was the daughter of the famous nationalist leader, General Aung San, who was assassinated on 19 July 1947, exactly a month after her second birthday and six months before Burma's independence. "I could not, as my father's daughter, remain indifferent to all that was going on. This is Burma's second struggle for independence," she said.

As her popularity rose, the generals put her under house arrest in 1989. This continued till mid-1995 and, on most days, the only human being she saw was her maid. It's indeed a tribute to her that ever after 12 years she continues to convince the people to fight peacefully and patiently. It was in 1990 that the military rejected her National League for Democracy's landslide win where she bagged 82 per cent of the seats.

Earlier in 1960, her mother was Burma's ambassador to India. As a diplomat's child, Suu Kyi made a wide circle of friends in Delhi those four years, which included Sanjay and Rajiv Gandhi. Later at Oxford, she chose politics for her B.A., apart from economics and philosophy. By the time she graduated in 1967, she met her future husband, Dr Michael Aris, whom she married in 1972. She quickly settled as a homemaker after her sons were born — Alexander in 1973 and Kim in 1977.

Politics, as such, never attracted her despite her obsession with her father, who had built the Burmese army and steered the country to independence. Her aim, when she arrived in Burma, was to build a chain of libraries named after him. In fact the \$1.3 million Nobel Peace Prize amount she was

*Suu Kyi
myanmar*

Aung San Suu Kyi's journey from devoted wife and mother to vibrant politician is a story of personal tragedy, humiliation, incarceration and the fight against fear. Her consistency would shame politicians of all hues in South Asia, writes STANLEY THEODORE



SHEER TENACITY: Aung San Suu Kyi talking to supporters at opposition party headquarters following her release from house arrest in Yangon. When she tells the people the road to freedom is long, she also needs to understand that splinters of glass are dangerous for cupped hands too

awarded in 1991 formed her education and health trust for the Burmese.

What followed later was a personal tragedy made worse by the junta. In 1998, Aris was suffering from prostate cancer and knew his time was near. He wanted to see her one last time and say goodbye. They had last met three years before. The Burmese junta refused him a visa. Instead, they offered to allow her to travel to England to meet him. Suu Kyi refused. She reckoned that if she did leave, the military junta would never allow her to return. The choice of staying back to fight with her countrymen must have been traumatic, but she never spoke about it. Aris died in March 1999.

For most of these 14 years she was under "house arrest" at her two-storey villa in University Avenue. Even when she was "freed", there were restrictions on her movement. In September 2000, she was imprisoned at home for buying a train ticket out of Rangoon. The influence of Gandhi's and Martin Luther King's tactics of non-violence is unmistakable. Till her release, she used to address the public who arrived to see her, standing on a step-ladder, from inside her rundown home whose sky blue gates were locked. She would urge peace and restraint, repeating the point that the road to freedom was a long haul.

A large amount of her courage can be attributed to her single-mindedness in fighting fear — a quality she has been extending to her people. When she was six, she would stand in the middle of her huge home for the entire night to help conquer her fear of darkness.

This kind of stubbornness be-

came a way of life. When first imprisoned, her concern was her wonderful garden, which she tried her best to keep alive. "A garden like this requires a lot of money to keep up, and I couldn't afford to take care of it. Of course, I refused to accept anything from the military," she told *Vanity Fair*. As her children approached their teens, her letters were censored. She discovered the junta was doing her a favour by allowing her

A large amount of her courage can be attributed to her single-mindedness in fighting fear — a quality she has been extending to her people. When she was six, she would stand in the middle of her huge home for the entire night to help conquer her fear of darkness

to correspond with her children. She stopped receiving their mail and stopped writing to them, till the junta realised the folly.

She admitted to getting depressed those days but strongly denied getting "very depressive". To help overcome the odds, she often played Bach on the family piano which she refused to sell along with the furniture to raise

money. Today that piano lies in disuse after a string broke in one of her temperamental sessions. The garden slowly died and was infested with snakes.

Suu Kyi was physically attacked on different occasions. In 1996, her convoy was attacked with rods and stones after the transport minister said she would be killed. The first was in April 1989, during a campaign at Irrawaddy. The military unit there was asked to take aim at her, but she refused to budge. A possible assassination was averted by the sudden intervention of an army major. In July 1998, some distance from Rangoon, the military stepped her when she was leaving to meet NLD colleagues. She stayed in her car for five days. The military seized the car and drove her home against her will. The next month, the episode repeated itself at the same roadblock. This time, she took food and water in anticipation, but when this ran out she was prevented from getting fresh supplies.

This tenacity added to her popularity, which the generals detested right from day one. In 1990, the military cordoned off temples when people claimed the Buddha statues were growing breasts after her electoral victory and interpreted this as the Almighty's endorsement of her leadership. *Time* magazine wrote, "Girls with astrological charts suggesting strength of character have been banned from state-run beauty contests for fear their success might augur a rise in Suu Kyi's power. Accompanying her in state-run news programmes, she has been depicted as a headless, toothless, democracy sorceress." Suu Kyi is

✓

*car-
painted
the con-
spective. Suu Kyi is*

Broken piano

Aris' (on her) choice of husband that renders her patriotism suspect."

But her sense of humour always helped her through. When someone asked, at a public meeting, why she married a foreigner, she said, "I married a foreigner because I grew up in foreign places. If I had grown up in Meiktila, then perhaps I would have married -- you." The crowd was in splits.

These 14 years have shown a remarkable consistency in thought, word and action that would shame politicians of all hues in South Asia. Her objective is clear -- freedom and democracy. The means are clear -- non-violence. And time is not a constraint. On recently being released after 18 months of detention, she said, "What we want is the freedom of all political parties, not just our party."

The situation was appropriately summed up in *The Guardian*, "One free in Burma, fifty million to go." She is destined some day to rule Burma, a country in sharp degeneration. Inflation is 50 per cent, foreign reserves are a pathetic \$250 million, electricity is poor and most commodities are in short supply. Drugs are rampant with

Burma accounting for 50 per cent of the USA's narcotics market. Aids is beyond epidemic levels, with 15 per cent of the population having tested HIV positive. The environment is frightening and only Brazil shares the dubious distinction of recording the world's worst deforestation rates. Burma is the only country with almost 20 per cent of its people in literal slavery, which the junta patronises in the name of tradition. There are no investments to talk about and Suu Kyi is pleading against investments till democracy is achieved.

Apart from handling these hard truths, Suu Kyi would have to build and nurture democratic institutions -- a job, which harshly put, makes house arrest an easier proposition. To make matters worse, the army would continue to play an important role in the country's politics. When she tells the people the road to freedom is long, she also needs to understand that splinters of glass are dangerous for cupped hands too, and that life is a much harder struggle than playing Bach on a broken piano.

(The author is The Statesman's Hyderabad-based Special Representative.)

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er the Essar Group's bid as the company had not fulfilled previous production sharing contracts and was a defaulter. And another letter to the Prime Minister the next day, saying Essar was a big-time debt defaulter and should be denied the contract on grounds of bankruptcy.

Mr Naik, though, wasn't impressed with this barrage of complaints and wrote back to the MP that the allegation of the company not fulfilling the production sharing contract was false. The minister also pointed that the contract with the company regarding one of the blocks, for which, Mr Singh had accused the company of not keeping its share of the bargain, had not yet become effective.

The final contracts should be ready in a few months, an official said, pointing that the contracts would, however, become effective only after the companies concerned submit

HYDERABAD, May 29. -- Mr N C compromising Gujarat line' endorsed meeting at Warangal, which asserted mise on secularism, but assured cont government.

"We have sacrificed the position o post) to uphold secular values. There Gujarat issue and we will continue to secular agenda," Mr Naidu told party debate on the crucial political resoluti

He claimed credit for forcing the B ing Gujarat polls and justified the den removal. Significantly, Mr Naidu and criticising the BJP. "Though we don't i of other states, our demand for Mr Me ests of national unity and communal h

In another resolution, the TDP pl NDA government to counter cross-be said all the parties must stand united rity and seek the help of friendly nati

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'Speak up for democracy'

AUNG HLA TUN
YANGON, MAY 27

MYANMAR
Opposition
leader Aung
San Suu Kyi
appealed for public support to
bring democracy to the mili-
tary-ruled country on Monday.
She spoke to her biggest audi-
ence since she was freed from
house arrest this month.

Over 600 supporters and
diplomats gathered to mark the
12th anniversary of Suu Kyi's
National League for Democ-
racy's (NLD) sweeping victory
in Myanmar's last elections in
1990. She urged people to be

more active in politics.

"Most people think they
have done their duty if they
have voted," Suu Kyi said at the
NLD's ramshackle headquar-
ters in central Yangon. "What I
would like to tell them is that
voting alone does not fulfil their
duty. They have to take part
themselves. It is necessary to
carry out organisational activi-
ties among people relentlessly."

The military government's
strict rule has effectively sup-
pressed open forms of public
support for NLD since the
party was prevented from tak-
ing power after 1990 poll win.

While lauded abroad, eight
years of house arrest since 1990



and no domestic media cover-
age mean the Nobel peace lau-
reate has faded from public
view in her country. Suu Kyi's
release on May 6 from her 19-
months' house arrest was not
reported in the state media.

On Monday, NLD reiter-
ated its commitment to talks
with the junta. "Holding mean-
ingful dialogue is the only way
to tackle the matter concerning
results of 1990 general election
and to resolve political, eco-
nomic, social, health and edu-
cation problems," the NLD
said in a statement.

(additional reporting by
Katie Hunt in Bangkok)
—Reuters

INDIAN EXPRESS

28 MAY 2002

Malaysia on international crime trail

The Star/Asia News Network

Quattrocchi extradition case

KUALA LUMPUR, April 9. — Malaysia has proposed a Bill that would allow foreign states to seek its help on crimes in those countries. The Bill is expected to be debated in the current Dewan Rakyat meeting.

The Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Bill will also enable Malaysia to obtain international assistance in criminal matters by or through the attorney-general, using diplomatic channels.

The Bill defines serious offences as those that come under the Anti-money Laundering

NEW DELHI, April 9. — An appeal by Ottavio Quattrocchi — accused by the CBI of receiving \$7.13 million as kickbacks in the Bofors case — against extradition proceedings initiated against him is pending before the Malaysian High Court. The CBI said it wasn't in a position to indicate how long it will take for Quattrocchi to be extradited. A Malaysian trial court was hearing the extradition proceedings before Quattrocchi moved the High Court. The CBI claims it has documents to substantiate its charge. — SNS

Act and crimes that would lead to a minimum one-year jail term or death penalty.

The Bill, however, does not authorise the

arrest or detention of anyone for extradition. According to its provisions, prescribed foreign states may request for search and seizure and also enforcement of forfeiture orders made in their country.

Clause 35 provides for the High Court here to register a foreign forfeiture order for the recovery and confiscation of funds or property received in connection with an offence committed in that country.

Similarly, the A-G may apply for a warrant following a request to conduct searches or seizures if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the things requested for are in Malaysia.

THE STAR

Mahathir for U.N. meet to define terrorism

HD-1A
By Amit Baruah

S. S. Amin - Malacca

SINGAPORE, APRIL 1. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, today called for an "international agreement" for the condemnation of an act of terrorism.

Dr. Mahathir's statement, made at the inauguration of an extraordinary session of the three-day Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Kuala Lumpur today, saw him reiterate the need for a U.N. conference to define "terrorism". "I would like to suggest here that armed attacks or other forms of attacks against civilians must be regarded as acts of terror and the perpetrators regarded as terrorists... if the attack is against civilians, then they must be considered terrorists," he said. "Groups or Governments, which support attacks on civilians, must be regarded as terrorists, irrespective of the justification of the operations carried out, irrespective of the nobility of the struggle," Dr. Mahathir said in remarks that may be considered as provocative by some of the countries attending the conference.

In a sense, the position taken by Dr. Mahathir is very much a mainstream one which condemns acts of violence against terrorism — not just restricted to States or cause of his choice. Calling upon the U.N. to define terrorism, Dr. Mahathir said: "But Muslims everywhere must condemn terrorism once it is clearly defined. Terrorising peo-

ple is not the way of Islam. Certainly, killing people is not Islamic." "We must object strongly to the linking of Muslims with terror just because a few Muslims have resorted to acts of terror. We must point out that Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews and others are equally guilty of terrorism. Terrorists must be identified by their acts and nothing else," he stressed.

According to him, the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks were an "unmitigated disaster" for Muslims all over the world. "Our image, which had not been good, has been made worse. It does not help that we are weak and disunited. Unless we are able to turn the present worldwide anger over the terrorist attack of Sept. 11 into a real campaign against all terrorists irrespective of their religious faiths, we are going to find that Muslim bashing will be heightened..."

Calling for unity among the often fractious Islamic Foreign Ministers forum, he said, "Let us put aside other considerations and strive for consensus in our fight against the blight of blind anger and frustration and prove that Islam is indeed a way of life that will bring about the well-being and glory to the Muslims and to mankind as a whole," he maintained.

On the Israeli aggression against the Palestinians, Dr. Mahathir said it was not an eye for an eye as far as the Israelis were concerned — it was a life for being hit by a stone.