

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2003

H9-10
3/11

MAHATHIR'S IMPRESSIVE LEGACY

S. S. byia - Malaysia

AFTER A DISTINGUISHED reign of 22 years, Mahathir Mohamad has stepped down as Prime Minister of Malaysia and handed over power to a trusted successor, Abdullah Ahmed Badawi. His solid contribution: providing clear-sighted and unwavering leadership to the transformation of Malaysia from an agricultural, tin and estate economy into an industrial powerhouse of the East; and delivering dynamic economic growth along with stability and communal harmony. Contrary to many a cynical prediction, Dr. Mahathir bowed out of office with confidence and grace. This experience recalls a similar exercise of transfer of power carried out in neighbouring Singapore, where another strong leader and moderniser, Lee Kuan Yew, successfully handed over power to a chosen successor, Goh Chok Tong. Dr. Mahathir's critics, especially in the West, fiercely assailed his outspoken contrariness, his political intolerance and imperiousness, the alleged human rights violations, and the 'guided democracy' system that is practised in Malaysia as it is in some other ASEAN countries. But above all they hated his guts. He, in turn, did not pass up a single opportunity to hit back at the double standards they exemplified on all issues of global significance.

The development of an indigenous industrial base, the creation of world-class infrastructure, the construction of power symbols like the Twin Towers or 'Putra Jaya', the new capital city outside Kuala Lumpur, and tourist destinations like Langkawi will stand enduring testimony to his role as nation-builder and moderniser. As leader of the multi-religious ruling coalition known as the National Front and its dominant Malay party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), Dr. Mahathir not only provided political stability but also ensured that the country did not witness the kind of riots that marked the birth of Singapore in the mid-1960s. But the fo-

cus was always on economic growth and stability. Malaysia is today a leading Asian Tiger economy, thanks among other things to huge investment flows from the West. In that sense, whatever be the policy differences, Dr. Mahathir and foreign capital found themselves in a highly congenial relationship. But he also strongly encouraged local industrialists to spread their wings first in the region and then in the rest of world. India found in him a good friend who recognised the potential of enhancing ties with a country to which he could trace his ethnic roots.

Dr. Mahathir distinguished himself in yet another way, in response to a major crisis. While the malaise of over-investment and reckless bank lending, which tormented much of South-East Asia in 1997-98, affected Malaysia as well, it was the distinctive manner in which its helmsman handled the crisis that stood out in the region. To cope with capital flight and the downturn, his Government imposed currency controls and boosted public expenditure. Both courses of action were the opposite of what the rest of the region followed on advice from the International Monetary Fund. The net outcome was that Malaysia suffered the least from the South-East Asian crisis; in fact, it was the only country that managed without finance from either the IMF or the World Bank. From a policy standpoint, there is no denying that the corrective steps Malaysia took turned out to be better medicine than what the IMF was then suggesting. Malaysia's fifth Premier, Abdullah Badawi, certainly has his task cut out. He faces the challenge of emerging out of the shadow of a towering mentor, building on the achievements, and remedying the weaknesses and distortions. The socio-political challenges at home, especially from fundamentalist groups, and the need to maintain the tempo of economic revival are quite formidable, but he knows where to turn should he need counsel.

Amid praise, Mahathir bows out

JALIL HAMID

KUALA LUMPUR, OCTOBER 31

MALAYSIAN PM Mahathir Mohamad, one of Asia's longest-serving leaders, retired on Friday to a mix of Asian praise and Western silence after an international outcry over his remarks about Jews.

Malaysia's King Syed Sirajuddin Jamalullail accepted Mahathir's resignation and swore in his deputy, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, as the country's fifth Prime Minister. The 78-year-old leader of the mainly Muslim South East Asian nation spent much of his time rubbing



Mahathir bids bye on Friday. Reuters

Western governments the wrong way, while becoming a respected spokesman within the Islamic and developing worlds.

But Mahathir's speech to an Islamic summit two weeks before he stepped down, in which he referred to what he called Jewish domination of the world, raised a storm of protest from the United States, Europe, Australia and Israel.

Leaving his old office, Mahathir was asked by journalists if he had any advice for US President George W. Bush. To this, Mahathir replied: "It doesn't pay not to tell the truth."

On the eve of his retirement, Mahathir was modest about his place in history. "As Shakespeare said, the evil that men do lives after them and the good is oft interred with their bones." —Reuters

End of an era: Mahathir steps down after 22 years

Star/ ANN & AP

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct. 31. — It has been a long and smooth transition and it finally drew to a close.

Mr Mahathir Mohamad retired as Prime Minister of Malaysia today after more than 22 years, leaving behind a nation that has become a model of well-being and prosperity, civil order and economic development for Asia.

He handed over the reins to the new Prime Minister Mr Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who now has the unenviable task of

filling some very huge shoes.

Mr Mahathir's retirement ends an era of iconic South-east Asian leaders — including Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew, Indonesia's Suharto and the Philippines' Ferdinand Marcos — whose long tenures and strong personal styles left a deep imprint on the region.

Mr Mahathir had ruled Malaysia since 1981, spearheading its rapid transformation from a tin and rubber-producing backwater into a high-tech exporter and one of

S.E. Asia's wealthiest and most developed countries.

But his successes were tempered by autocratic leanings and the free use of laws that allowed detention without trial, forced media self-censorship and banned opposition rallies.

He also gained a reputation as a blunt-spoken and often controversial advocate of the developing and Islamic worlds, with fiery criticism of Western-dominated globalisation and the US-led war on terrorism.

His final months in office bore witness to an



A NEW DAWN: Mr Abdullah Ahmad Badawi meets well wishers at his new office in Putrajaya on Friday. — AFP

outpouring of tributes and emotions for this man who has been such an indelible part of the Malaysian consciousness. Everywhere he went, the crowds surged

around him like an emotional blanket. People could not seem to get enough of him.

Mr Mahathir must have posed for hundreds of photographs with people from all walks of life and even journalists who had covered him all these years were clamouring for opportunities to be photographed with him.

The Mahathir Era might have ended, but his vision, his ideals, his principles and dreams will live on simply because he had made them his people's too.

Mahathir aid snub to America

Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Oct. 28 — Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad today rushed off a US Senate decision to curb aid to the country on account of recent remarks he made about Jews ruling the world by proxy.

"It doesn't make any difference to us. We don't really need that money," Mahathir said at his office in the administrative capital three days before he steps down from 22 years in power.

The US Senate unanimously agreed yesterday to condition 1.2 billion in military training aid to Malaysia on a determination by secretary of state Colin Powell that the country supports and promotes religious freedom, including for Jews.

Malaysia prides itself on being a peaceful multicultural nation, with a 60 per cent Muslim majority, large non-Muslim Chinese and Indian minorities, and hardly any Jews.

The provision was added to an \$18 billion foreign aid spending bill, which the Senate is expected to approve this week. While the amount was small, aides said the move should send a message to Malaysia's government.

President George Bush said he rebuked Mahathir at an Asia-Pacific summit in Bangkok a week ago. The Malaysian leader doesn't remember it like that.

"It's the biggest lie. If he had rebuked me, I'm quite sure I would have rebuked him also," Mahathir was quoted as saying by the state-run news agency Bernama at the weekend.

The 78-year-old provoked sharp criticism from Western governments and Israel this month for comments at a meeting of the world's Islamic leaders.

"The Europeans killed six million Jews out of 12 million. But today, the Jews rule this world by proxy," he said.

His words evoked old demons of European anti-semitism, and

western governments, including Israel, joined a chorus of condemnation.

But the set-piece speech by Mahathir, viewed as a moderate Muslim, mainly castigated his fellow faithful for centuries of backwardness and introspection in the face of modernisation.

He replied to critics at the time with accusations of double standards on what can be said about Jews and Muslims, and was equally unrepentant today about US senators.

"They want to dictate (to) the world. We are all being run by the US Senate, it's no good having our own elections. We better elect (vote) in the US elections and we can be sure we get the right representatives," he said, laughing.

The US House of Representatives passed its version of the foreign aid spending bill in July,

so it does not contain any aid restriction. The two bills will have to be reconciled.

Some analysts believe Washington could hurt its own interests if it alienated Malaysia through this largely symbolic gesture.

"It is a model of moderate Islam," said Brad Glosserman, of the Pacific Forum CSIS think tank based in Hawaii, adding that Malaysia served as an example for Muslim participation in government beyond Southeast Asia.

Carl Thayer, analyst at the Australian Defence College in Canberra, said undermining the military-to-military relationship, which was one of the strongest ties between the two countries, was an odd way to treat an ally.

"The US could be shooting itself in the foot when it wants co-operation in the war on terror," he said.

Senate sets condition linked to Jews for military funds

Malaysia sorry for 'anti-Jewish' PM

Associated Press

PUTRAJAYA (Malaysia), Oct. 17. — Faced with furious criticism from the USA and Europe over Prime Minister Mr Mahathir Mohamad's assertion that Jews rule the world, Malaysia today apologised for any misunderstanding and claimed that no offence was intended.

But foreign minister Syed Hamid Albar, struggling to contain the controversy wrought by his blunt-spoken boss, insisted he was not apologising for Mr Mahathir's speech itself and said the remarks had been taken out of context.

The Malaysian Prime Minister yesterday told leaders of the 57-nation Organisation of the Islamic Conference that "Jews rule the world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them". He used assertions of Jewish dominance to buttress his chief point that Muslims needed to embrace modern knowledge and technology and overcome divisions over religious dogma that have left them weakened on the

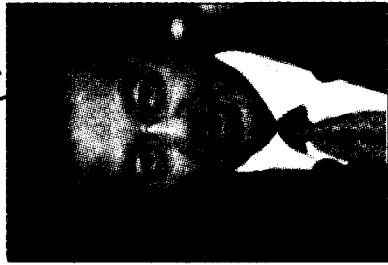
world stage.

The speech drew immediate international criticism and raised fears that it could fan violence against Jews. But it also got a standing ovation from the kings, Presidents, sheiks and emirs — including key US allies — who said they didn't find it anti-Semitic and found it a good analysis of the Muslim world's problems.

The extensive statements about Jews nonetheless stood out. Condemnations poured in from the USA, EU, Australia and Germany, which summoned Malaysia's charge d'affaires in Berlin to protest the comments as "totally unacceptable".

In Brussels, EU leaders concluded a summit with a statement accusing Mr Mahathir of spreading falsehoods and sowing ethnic and religious divisions. "His unacceptable comments hinder all our efforts to further interethnic and religious harmony, and have no place in a decent world," the EU leaders said in a statement.

Mr Mahathir declined to speak to reporters who approached him today.



'Jews rule the world by proxy... Muslims had been unable to prevent Jews from dominating the world'

"I'm sorry that they have misunderstood the whole thing," Syed Hamid said. "The intention is not to create controversy. His intention is to show that if you ponder and sit down to think, you can be very powerful." The world's Muslims feel "sidelined or marginalised", reflecting a widespread perception in the Islamic world as the war on terrorism has evolved into U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and

WHAT THEY HAD TO SAY

- **Afghan President:** The speech correctly addressed the issues confronting Muslims and regarding what Muslims should do. Muslims must educate themselves, they must begin to be aggressive and develop themselves.
- **Pakistani President:** I am sure he did not ask to go to war against Jews. No, I don't think the speech was anti-Semitic.
- **EU:** His unacceptable comments hinder all our efforts to further interethnic and religious harmony, and have no place in a decent world... Such false and anti-Semitic remarks are as offensive to Muslims as they are to others.
- **US State Department:** Mr Mahathir's remarks were offensive and inflammatory. We view them with the contempt and derision they deserve.
- **Israeli foreign ministry:** It is not new that in such forums there is always an attempt to reach the lowest common denominator, which is Israel bashing.

Israeli has increased repression of the Palestinians. "Please forget about anti-Semitism," Syed Hamid said. In their reactions to the speech, most OIC delegates focused on the aspects that Egyptian foreign minister Mr Ahmed Maher called "a good road map" toward Muslim empowerment and said they did not find the remarks anti-Semitic. "It was a brilliant speech. Very logical,"

President Khatami of Iran said. "Anti-Semitism is a product of the West. Muslims are not anti-Semitic," Gen. Pervez Musharraf said he did not want to comment on the speech, but "I am sure he did not ask to go to war against Jews".

But in Washington, the State Department called the remarks inflammatory and said: "We view them with the contempt and derision they deserve."

Describing Mr Putin's speech as refreshing, Malaysian foreign minister Syed Hamid said his presence at the summit would allow the body to look into establishing dialogue partnerships with other non-Muslim countries, much like the Asean. — Star/ANN

Putin praised at OIC meet

PUTRAJAYA (Malaysia), Oct. 17. — Russian President Mr Vladimir Putin marked his historic presence at the 10th OIC Summit with a surprise appearance as one of the speakers at the opening session.

He won warm applause from Muslim leaders when he, through an interpreter, said terrorism should not be equated to any religion. "The position of Russia is constant and clear. Terrorism must not be equated to any religion or culture." He went on to say that Russia and Muslim countries could have mutually advantageous co-operation, pointing out the common stand among them that there should be a central UN role for settling international problems.

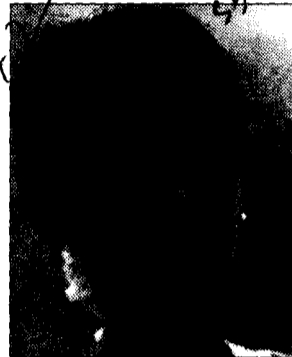
Describing Mr Putin's speech as refreshing, Malaysian foreign minister Syed Hamid said his presence at the summit would allow the body to look into establishing dialogue partnerships with other non-Muslim countries, much like the Asean. — Star/ANN

US Senate okays sanctions against Myanmar

Associated Press

WASHINGTON, June 12. — The US Senate overwhelmingly approved economic penalties against Myanmar following the military government's arrest of Nobel laureate Ms Aung San Suu Kyi and its crackdown on the pro-democracy movement.

The sanctions, approved by 97-1 would ban U.S. imports of Myanmar goods. It would also freeze the assets of the ruling junta and require the USA to oppose loans to Myanmar from international financial institutions. "Supporters of a free Burma believe that serving the cause of freedom is America's challenge and obligation," said Senator Mitch McConnell, the No. 2 Senate Republican. "We should not abandon the people of Burma during their greatest moments of need." The House International Relations Committee was expected to endorse a



Ms Suu Kyi

similar bill today.

Republican Tom Lantos, the committee's top Democrat, said the sanctions "will have a direct impact on the wallets of Burmese generals who run its factories and suppress democracy." Suu Kyi was arrested on 30 May following clashes between her supporters and government-backers. UN envoy Mr Razali Ismail, said she was uninjured and he expects the junta to release her in two weeks. World leaders, including President Bush, have called for her immediate release.

Kuala Lumpur to buy 18 Sukhois in \$900-million deal

Malaysia boosts firepower

Kuala Lumpur, May 19 (Reuters): Malaysia moved today to buy the most powerful combat aircraft ever operated by a Southeast Asian country, announcing a \$900-million deal with Russian supplier Sukhoi.

Malaysia had agreed in principle to buy 18 Sukhoi Su-30MK fighters, defence minister Najib Razak said.

Aerospace analyst Gerard Frawley said the deal would encourage other air forces in the region to upgrade. "This will be a quantum leap in Southeast Asian air power," he said. "The Sukhois will greatly outperform anything operated by Malaysia's near neighbours, notably as ground-strike aircraft but also against air and naval targets."

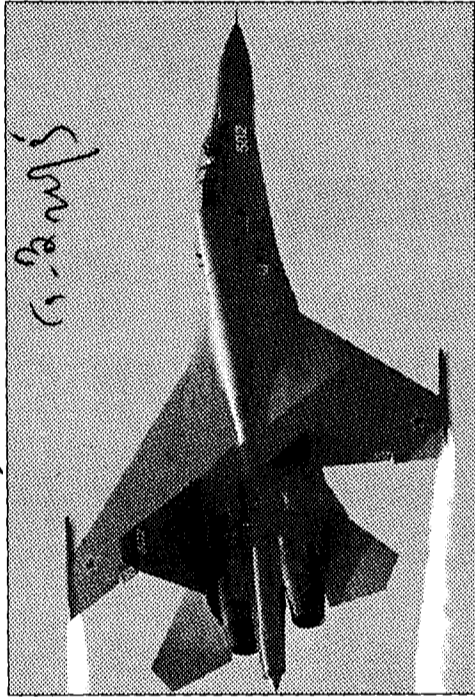
Najib said the contract was likely to be signed this year and the Sukhois would be delivered in mid-2006. "This is a result of our modernisation programme," he told a news conference. "There is a need for combat aircraft, especially multi-role combat aircraft."

Putin is expected to visit Malaysia before October.

Malaysia may partly pay for the planes with the sale of commodities but this will be decided at a later date, Najib said. Malaysia is expected to sell palm oil in a counter trade to part finance the Sukhoi purchase.

London-based academic Tim Huxley said Malaysia had to consider a range of defence threats, albeit distant ones, including potential flare ups with northern neighbour Thailand or disputes with several countries, including China, over rights to the Spratly Islands.

The country has also traditionally been keen to keep up with neighbour Singapore, which is planning a purchase of its own batch of new-technology fighters. Frawley, editor of industry monthly *Australian Aviation*, pointed to the long range of the Su-30MK, which is similar to aircraft that Russia operates at home and has sold to China, India and, in a less advanced version, Vietnam.



A file picture of a Russian Sukhoi 30 MK fighter jet. (AFP)

Boeing Co is also in talks to sell Malaysia up to 18 F/A-18E/F Super Hornet fighters, although that \$1-billion deal has become hostage to political fallout from the Iraq war and the economic impact of the SARS virus.

Malaysia has been planning to buy both planes. Najib de-

Russian President Vladimir

clined to comment on the prospective Boeing deal.

While Boeing is left waiting, several European leaders who agreed with Malaysia's anti-war stance have begun visiting the country to build diplomatic ties and win lucrative contracts.

Russian President Vladimir

SODOMY CASE / NINE-YEAR JAIL TERM

Anwar appeal turned down

19.4.03

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, APRIL 18. The conviction and punishment of Anwar Ibrahim, former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, in the case relating to alleged sodomy were today confirmed by the Court of Appeal in Kuala Lumpur.

His lawyers sought yet another appeal against the verdict, this time at the federal court, the highest judicial forum. On the political plane, however, it looked as though Mr. Anwar was now beginning to stare at the closure of one of the last avenues open to him for any return to the centre-stage any time soon. The judicial verdict was pronounced by a three-member bench, even as Mr. Anwar completed his jail sentence in the other case relating to a corrupt practice that was aimed at a cover up of certain allegations of sexual misconduct by him in his capacity as Deputy Prime Minister. For his good behaviour in prison, he earned a one-third remission of his six-year sentence in the



Supporters of the jailed former Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim (left), wear protective masks bearing the words "Free Anwar Today" at the Federal Court in Kuala Lumpur on Friday. — AP

corruption case, and he completed the relevant term of his punishment by April 14 this year.

Mr. Anwar, aged 36, will begin a nine-year jail sentence in the sodomy case, with effect from April 14 this year, if the Federal Court were to take his fresh appeal into account and uphold the latest judgment. Should he win one more remission for good conduct, he might find himself at liberty by April 14, 2009, it is reckoned in Malaysia's legal circles.

However, in a strict legal sense, the final judicial word

on Mr. Anwar's fate in the sodomy case has not yet been pronounced. The conviction and sentencing of Mr. Anwar's alleged collaborator in the sodomy case were also upheld by the Court of Appeal in Kuala Lumpur. The bench consisted of Justices Pagan Singh Gull, Richard Malanjum and Hashim Yusoff.

The legal saga of Mr. Anwar's cases began in 1998 in the context of his dismissal as Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister. The exact circumstances of his dismissal from office as also the framing of the charges against him

were often lost in the mist of political controversies over his downfall from the pedestal of a heir-apparent to Malaysia's long-serving Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad.

However, Mr. Anwar's profile as a presumptive "prisoner of political dissent" - distinct from that of a prisoner of political conscience" - has vastly diminished since 1998, given the distinction of the West in general, and the U.S. in particular, to sustain the campaign that they had begun on his behalf on the wider international stage.

Today, even as Dr. Mahathir remains critical of the U.S. over its latest war in Iraq his political equanimity with Washington has improved dramatically since 1998, especially so after the West veered round to accepting him as an anti-terror campaigner in the wake of the September 11 events in 2001.

This aspect has something to do with the current perceptions in the West about the Anwar cases, at least behind the scenes.

SODOMY CASE / NINE-YEAR JAIL TERM

Anwar appeal turned down

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, APRIL 18. The conviction and punishment of Anwar Ibrahim, former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, in the case relating to alleged sodomy were today confirmed by the Court of Appeal in Kuala Lumpur.

His lawyers sought yet another appeal against the verdict this time at the Federal Court, the highest judicial forum. On the political plane, however, it looked as though Mr. Anwar was now beginning to stare at the closure of one of the last avenues open to him for any return to the centre-stage any time soon. The judicial verdict was pronounced by a three-member bench, even as Mr. Anwar completed his jail sentence in the other case relating to a corrupt practice that was aimed at a cover-up of certain allegations of sexual misconduct by him in his capacity as Deputy Prime Minister. For his good behaviour in prison, he earned a one-third remission of his six-year sentence in the



Supporters of the jailed former Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim (left), wear protective masks bearing the words "Free Anwar Today" at the Federal Court in Kuala Lumpur on Friday. — AP

corruption case, and he completed the relevant term of his punishment by April 14 this year. Mr. Anwar, aged 56, will begin a nine-year jail sentence in the sodomy case, with effect from April 14 this year. If the Federal Court were to take his fresh appeal into account and uphold the latest judgment, should he win one more remission for good conduct, he might find himself at liberty by April 14, 2009, it is reckoned in Malaysia's legal circles.

However, in a strict legal sense, the final judicial word on Mr. Anwar's fate in the sodomy case has not yet been pronounced. The conviction and sentencing of Mr. Anwar's alleged collaborator in the sodomy case were also upheld by the Court of Appeal in Kuala Lumpur. The bench consisted of Justices Pajjar Singh Gill, Richard Malanjum and Hashim Yusoff.

The legal saga of Mr. Anwar's cases began in 1998 in the context of his dismissal as Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister. The exact circumstances of his dismissal from office as also the framing of the charges against him

were often lost in the mist of political controversies over his downfall from the pedestal of a heir-apparent to Malaysia's long-serving Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad.

However, Mr. Anwar's profile as a presumptive "prisoner of political dissent" — distinct from that of a "prisoner of political conscience" — has vastly diminished since 1998, given the disinclination of the West in general, and the U.S. in particular, to sustain the campaign that they had begun on his behalf on the wider international stage. Today, even as Dr. Mahathir remains critical of the U.S. over its latest war in Iraq, his political equation with Washington has improved dramatically since 1998, especially so after the West veered round to accepting him as an anti-terror campaigner in the wake of the September 11 events in 2001.

This aspect has something to do with the current perceptions in the West about the Anwar cases, at least behind the scenes.