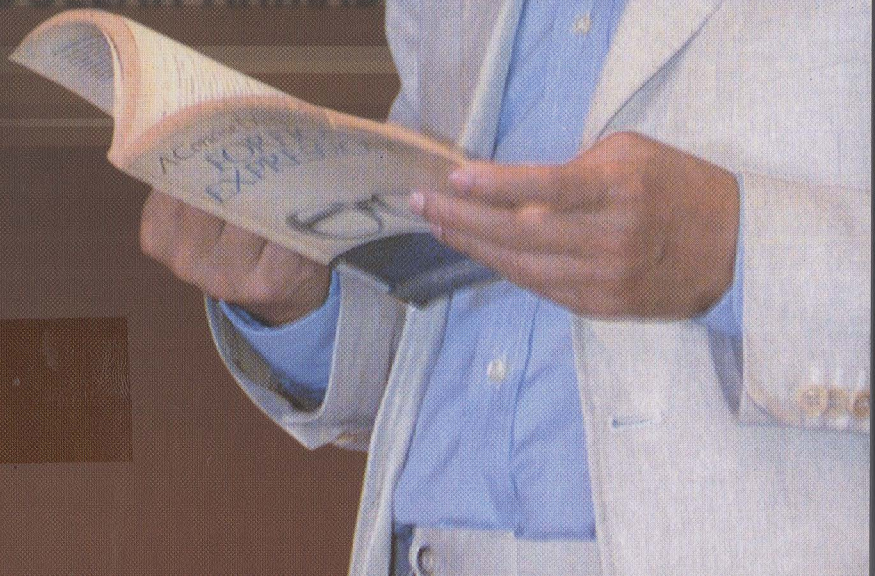


NOTES FROM THE UNITED NATIONS

ABDULLAH AHMAD



“This pot-pourri portrays as much Dollah (DKL) as it relates the persons and events which are chronicled. He has always been in the thick of it, even as he reflects on the unfolding times. There should be more such reflections so that our understanding of contemporary history is enriched.”

— Dato’ Dr Munir Majid,
*New Sunday Times columnist and
corporate leader.*

“Exceptionally readable. Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad’s experiences as Malaysia’s Special Envoy to the United Nations provides insightful commentaries into the framework and functions of the United Nations, in particular, its political underpinnings.”

— Dato’ P.G Lim,
*lawyer, former Ambassador to the
United Nations, former Director of
the KL Regional Centre of Arbitration.*

“With the skills of an artist, Abdullah paints a fascinating picture of Malaysian history with the hallowed halls of the United Nations as his canvas.”

— Prof. Dato’ Dr Shahril Talib,
*Executive Director of the Asia-
Europe Institute, University of Malaya.*

“From his perch as a UN insider, his observations on the world body make interesting reading. Abdullah Ahmad was a political player, a skilled hand at the sometimes cutthroat politics of the United Malays National Organisation. He still is and it shows.”

— S. Jayasankaran,
*Correspondent, Far Eastern Economic
Review and the Asian Wall Street Journal.*

NOTES FROM THE UNITED NATIONS

ABDULLAH AHMAD



PUSTAKA PERDANA



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TIMES EDITIONS

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Preface

In my life, even at the worst of times, I am happy to record that there was none who came up to me to say that he thought I had set my sights so high in whatever I did. Several events intervened to deny me to reach my potential or to fulfill my own possibilities. Tun Razak's sudden death, my share of mistakes and enemies.

I learned and relearned — insights earned in a labour of self-education that only death could stop — led me to see power not as an end to itself but as the means of redeeming the powerless.

I made some contribution which brought changes. Now, Malaysia is a vastly changed nation. Much, however, remains to be done and those who pick up the banner of progressive politics bear a heavy responsibility as my generation did. Huge and unacceptable discrepancies remain in the quality of life between the leafy Bukit Tunku and Ampang Hilir — U Thant Diplomatic Enclave and the rural areas and kampung in Kelantan, even in Selangor.

What I have written here was my shifting kaleidoscope of images and thoughts that occurred. I often would rub my eyes at the material prosperity most Malaysians now enjoy, but I am also shocked by the social problems that have yet to be solved. That is why political action and the democratic process remain as vital today as they were when I entered Malay College Kuala Kangsar in January 1948.

I took the opportunity to write and reflect on some of the more controversial issues and interesting happenings during my years in New York. Readers may agree or disagree with me but I am absolutely content to stand on the record and leave any political implications to you.

The articles tell a great deal about the events and I can imagine no better way to serve the memory of my stay in New York than their publication reproduced from the *Sunday Sun*. My gratitude goes to

Dato' Rejal Arbee, the editor-in-chief of the *Sun* and *Sunday Sun* who hired me as a columnist. One day before leaving for the United Nations in mid-1996, I had lunch with him. I told him that I would like to write a weekly column for him. Rejal did not hesitate even for a moment and accepted my proposal. I wouldn't say I was a good catch for the *Sunday Sun* but the column went on till mid-2000. I also acknowledge the crucial role of *Sunday Sun* editor, Mohanen Menon, without whom these articles could never have been published.

I would also like to thank my personal assistant in New York, Aminah bte Ahmad (1996–1998) and her successor Nazri bin Said (1998–2000) for typing these articles and faxing them to Menon, to Christine Chong and Aniza Anis Sallihudin of Federal Publications Sdn. Berhad. (General & Reference Publishing) for making the publication of this book possible.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my children — Adhha, Hamdia and Fuad — and especially to my wife Fauzah, who endured four years of living with a diplomat-cum-columnist. Her undivided love and loyalty contributed mightily to the joy of being a writer and subsequently editor-in-chief of the New Straits Times group of newspapers.



Kuala Lumpur, August 2004