



# THE DIARIST

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Abdullah Ahmad

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# THE DIARIST



PUSTAKA PERDANA



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## PREFACE

IT is said that in the United States of America, journalism is an extension of history, in Britain an extension of conversation. In Malaysia, somewhat to the Diarist's dissatisfaction, it is too much chronicle and too little talk. After a long absence, he had returned to the *New Straits Times* with the ink bubbling in his blood. If journalism is to be brought into the parlour and the salon, it should rejuvenate the art of dialogue and inspire a sense of fun in the daily grind of presenting the news.

And so it was that he decided to compile a personal collage. 'The NST Diary', a column begun on May 14, 2000 in the *New Sunday Times*, brings together his thoughts and observations which aren't reflected in the newspaper's editorial. It is about Kuala Lumpur society pictured in a mix of offhand reportage and commentary from an offbeat point of view. It is peopled by characters distilled from reality into symbol and caricature: from Tengku Pushy, socialites and ambitious social climbers to politicians (YB Zigzag), corporate figures, Walter Mittys and busybody nobodies.

The Diarist provides an upfront but coded insight into contemporary Malaysia. No honest writer can risk offending the fodder for his pen. He has to conceal in order to reveal, while he protects the feelings most exposed by those who clamber hardest up the greasy pole. Its supporters love 'The NST Diary' because it mirrors life as it is, sometimes imbued with warmth, humour and understanding of human nature. To the critics, it is a caustic, selective smokescreen and a baffling enigma.

The Diarist has enjoyed writing 'The NST Diary'. It is hard to break new ground in a newspaper that has written the nation's story for more than a century and a half. But he hopes to have delved below the surface of this rich tapestry. 'The NST Diary' is a true representation of Kuala Lumpur, behind the *wayang, makyong*, comedy and theatrics that often disguise its motives and aspirations.

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