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GHAFFAR

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Alias Mohamed



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Preface

This book is no ordinary biography. You will not find the text peppered with strenuous denunciations of political enemies, or reams of table-thumping rhetoric. The approach here is far more personal, seeking to tell the story of a simple *kampung* boy who rose above his circumstances to serve those around him and the country he loves.

It is a story about the struggle against the handicap of humble birth in a society dominated by wealthy aristocrats, about losing one's parents at an early age, and watching one's brothers and sisters die for lack of good food and medical care. But it is also much more than this. It is about succeeding despite the odds. It is about an ordinary Malaysian who achieved extraordinary things.

There is humour, too. By reading this book, you will learn about the strange name Encik Abdul Ghafar Baba was given at birth, the time the frightened young boy turned *bomoh* for the night in order to avoid a long, dark trek to visit a local medicine man, and how, years later, the late Tunku Abdul

Ghafar Baba

Rahman manoeuvred a reluctant party leader into accepting a ministerial position.

The political history is rendered in a matter-of-fact style, with emphasis on Ghafar Baba's determination to improve the economic condition of the rural folk through his activities in MARA and the Ministry of National and Rural Development. Ghafar Baba became Chief Minister of Malacca when he was only 34 years old. Almost immediately, he won the admiration of the people, even opposition supporters, when he denied himself the comforts of the official residence or the use of the state-provided car. Concerned about remaining accessible to the people he loved, the new Chief Minister continued to live in a small wooden house, using the new car strictly for official functions.

Such guileless simplicity appeals to a wide cross section of Malaysians even today. As this book rightly points out, politicians on both sides of the Malay political divide frequently have a kind word for Ghafar Baba. The Deputy Prime Minister may have plenty of political opponents, but there are few who genuinely regard the easygoing politician with the personal enmity that poisons many relationships among contemporary leaders. It is this characteristic, as well as his unerring sensitivity to the mood of the people on a wide variety of political issues, that marks him out as one of the most outstanding political leaders Malaysia has so far produced.

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