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Some facets of far-sighted leader

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The late Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak Hussein not only strengthened the country with his vision of affirmative action but also nurtured able leaders to continue his policies.

The author of the pictorial biography Tun Razak: Jejak Bertapak Seorang Patriot, Datuk Zainuddin Maidin, said the country's second Prime Minister was an honest man, who was also open-minded and far-sighted.

Speaking at the launching of the book by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Zainuddin, a former journalist and editor-in-chief of the Utusan Group, reminisced on the times when he was assigned to cover Tun Razak.

"This was the most dramatic, exciting and challenging period of my career," he said, "and will be part of my memories."

Zainuddin recalled an incident on a Sunday in Labuan in 1971 when reporters could not send their stories to Kuala Lumpur as the post office was closed.

"A Berita Harian reporter, Rejal Arbee (now editor-in-chief of The Sun) phoned up the postmaster at home and told him that Tun Razak wanted him to open the post office that day because the reporters needed to send their stories."

Amidst laughter in the audience, Zainuddin went on to relate how the postmaster cycled to the reporters' hotel, collected their stories, opened the post office and sent the copies by telex.

"The next day, Tun Razak was delighted that his visit to Labuan was prominently featured on all newspapers, not knowing that this was made possible through a white lie...."

Zainuddin said Tun Razak was a man with a serious demeanour that intimidated many reporters.

However, he was also a caring and sensitive leader as evidenced by the concern he showed reporters by offering them food cooked by his wife when they were on assignment at Sri Taman, the Prime Minister's official residence.

On the book he authored, Zainuddin felt it only depicted a small part of Tun Razak's many feats and accomplishments.

The book was almost not written due to some personal problems but Zainuddin said he completed it after appeals from Azah Aziz, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Tun Razak Foundation.

Zainuddin also expressed his gratitude to, among others, the Tun Razak memorial, the National Archive, the Information Department's Photograph Library, the New Straits Times library and the Utusan Group.

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