

Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj (1903-1990)

Perhaps the most fondly remembered Prime Minister. Tunku is regarded as the Father of Independence.

Tunku was responsible for leading Malaya towards independence.

The seventh child of the Sultan of Kedah, Tunku received his early education at the Penang Free School.

He went on to study at St Catherine's College, Cambridge University, where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in law and history.

On returning home, he joined the Kedah civil service as a cadet in the legal advisor's office, and then as a district officer in several Kedah districts.

His attempt at completing his law studies at the Inner Temple in England in 1938 came to a halt due to the outbreak of the Second World War. He resumed his studies eight years later and came home with his legal qualifications in 1949.

On Aug 26, 1951, Tunku became the United Malays National Organisation (Umno) president, succeeding Datuk Onn Jaafar.

His dream to foster co-operation among the various ethnic groups saw the birth of the Alliance Party in 1955.

Under his leadership, the Alliance won the country's first general election in July 1955. Tunku was then appointed the country's Chief Minister and Minister of Home Affairs. In 1956, he led a mission to London for negotiations with the British government concerning independence for Malaya.

The meeting resulted in the signing of the Independent Treaty at Lancaster House in London on Feb 8, 1956 and consequently, the independence of Malaya on Aug 31, 1957. Tunku was then elected as the first Prime Minister of Malaya.

Tribute to our PMs

Malaysians are fortunate to have been guided by four compassionate Prime Ministers during our 44 years since independence. We pay tribute to these leaders, past and present, and remember them for their sacrifices and dedication to see the nation grow and develop into what it is today. ANITA ANANDARAJAH writes.

He held office until April 15, 1959, when he stepped down to lead the Alliance in the election. Following the party's victory, he resumed office on Aug 21, 1959.

On Sept 22, 1970, Tunku ended his term as Prime Minister and was succeeded by Tun Abdul Razak.

Tun Abdul Razak (1922-1976)

The second Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdul Razak succeeded Tunku Abdul Rahman in 1970. He is known as the Father of Development for his contributions to national and rural development.

Born in Pulau Keladi in Pahang, Razak received his early education at the Malay College Kuala Kangsar.

With a Malayan Union scholarship, he left for Britain in 1947 to study law. He received a degree of an Utter barrister from Lincoln's Inn.

In 1950, he became Umno Youth chief. Razak was also a member of the February 1956 mission to London to seek the independence of Malaya from the British.

He briefly served as Prime Minister

from April 15 until Aug 21, 1959, when Tunku stepped down to lead the Alliance party in the general election.

After the general election in 1959, he became the Minister of Rural Development in addition to holding the portfolios of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence.

Razak is credited with launching the New Economic Policy in 1971. The NEP set two basic goals — to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty and to reduce and eventually eradicate identification of economic function with race.

Tun Hussein Onn (1922-1990)

Tun Hussein Onn was elected the third Prime Minister on Jan 15, 1976. Malaysians remember him as the Father of Unity for his efforts to rectify imbalances between the communities through various policies.

This saw the implementation of the National Unit Trust Scheme in 1981.

He gave great consideration to the Rukun Tetangga and the fight against the drug menace.

The son of Datuk Onn Jaafar, he

received his early education in Singapore and at the English College in Johor Baru. After leaving school, he joined the Johor Military Force as a cadet in 1940 and was sent a year later to the Indian Military Academy in Dehra Dun, India.

Upon completion of his training, he was absorbed into the Indian Army and served in the Middle East when the Second World War broke.

In 1949, Hussein became the first Youth chief of Umno, which his father founded. He subsequently left to pursue his studies in law at Lincoln's Inn in London.

Hussein was persuaded to enter politics again upon his return from London in 1968.

He was appointed Minister of Education and Deputy Prime Minister soon after.

In 1981, Hussein resigned from office after a coronary bypass operation.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad (1925-)

Our longest serving Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was born on Dec 20, 1925. He attended the University of Malaya in Singapore, studying medicine before going on to open the first Malay clinic in the country, aptly named Klinik Mahathir in Alor Star.

His political career started in 1965 when he was elected to the Umno

Supreme Council.

He was named Education Minister in 1974 and served for three years before taking over the portfolio of Trade and Industry. He also was Defence Minister.

In 1976, he became the Deputy Prime Minister and became Prime Minister in 1981 after the resignation of Tun Hussein Onn.

Among other things, during his 20 years in office, he mooted the idea for the country to produce the Proton Saga, the first national car.

He is also responsible for putting the country on the world map with the tallest building in the world, the Petronas Twin Towers, and the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

Perhaps one of his most significant achievements was in 1997 when Dr Mahathir stunned the IMF by implementing controversial currency controls to stabilise the ringgit.

Dr Mahathir also penned *The Malay Dilemma*, about the Malays who were marginalised during the colonial era.

This dedicated Prime Minister continues to pave the way for the country's dream of becoming a fully developed nation by the year 2020.

Source:

1. Lentz III, Harris M. "Heads of State and Governments: A Worldwide Encyclopedia of Over 2300 Leaders, 1945 through 1992" Singapore: Toppan, 1996.
2. <http://www.kiat.net/malaysia/past-PM.html>