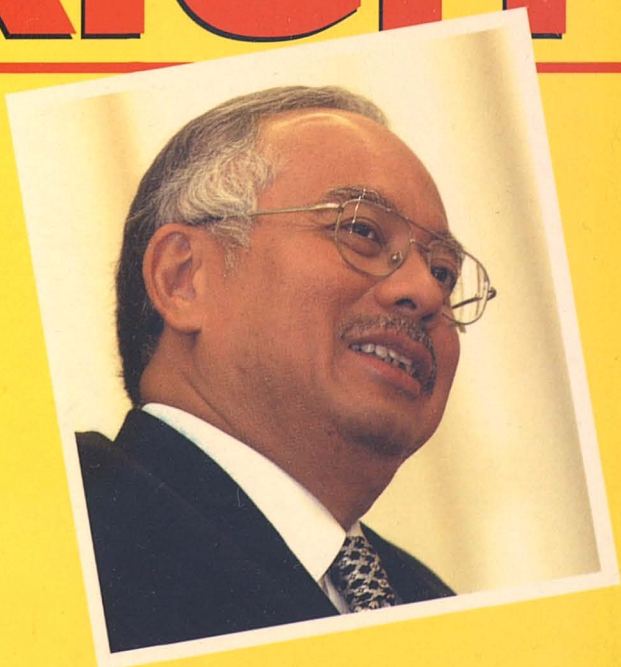


CHAMIL WARIYA

IN HIS OWN RIGHT



***Najib Razak and
Malaysian Politics***

NAJIB RAZAK



PERDANA
LEADERSHIP
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YAYASAN
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**NAJIB
RAZAK**
IN HIS OWN RIGHT

CHAMIL WARIYA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	
1. Following In The Father's Political Footstep	2
2. Stabilising Pahang Politics	20
3. Youth Wing Politics – The Struggle	32
4. Almost Detained Under The ISA	49
5. National Politics – Trials, Tribulations, Challenges And Opportunities	57
6. Heading Three Ministries	77
7. Becoming The Number Two Man	88
8. Appointment Of DPM – Reaction And Acceptance	108
9. DPM – Duties And Responsibilities	115
10. Deputy President – Duties And Role	143
11. Thirty Years And Counting	160
Bibliography	166
Index	169

INTRODUCTION

Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Abdul Razak marked his thirtieth active year in politics on February 21, 2006. Exactly thirty years earlier he won the Pekan parliamentary seat uncontested, succeeding his late father, the then Prime Minister and UMNO President who had passed away on January 14, 1976. After winning the Pekan constituency and being sworn in as Member of Parliament in March of that year, he began his political career at the tender age of 23.

Although the Tun Abdul Razak pedigree opened doors to politics, he made the grade on his own merit, quickly establishing himself and rising to the level to where he is now--Deputy Prime Minister and Deputy UMNO President.

This book features the early years and the landmarks he set during that thirty-year political career. This book also aims to show how he became a political figure who had his work cut out for him through the party apprenticeship. Although he is the son of a Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Mohd Najib rose through the ranks, beginning at the divisional level, then state, and finally national level. In the process he didn't have to trample on anyone. His political career didn't spark any controversy. He didn't gain his posts by grabbing anyone's position through close contests, but stepped in to fill vacancies.

When arriving at a cross-road, Najib proved to be an astute politician. The result was a smooth transition in party and government. This proved to be his forte, especially when Datuk Seri Anwar toppled Tun Ghafar Baba for the UMNO deputy presidency in 1993. The crisis that followed the dismissal of Anwar in October 2 1998 as deputy prime minister and party deputy president during the confrontation with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1998 showed Najib to be wise by remaining loyal and dutiful to Dr. Mahathir and the government.

Najib held fast and was patient when Dr. Mahathir named Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as deputy prime minister in early 1999. As the leading UMNO Vice-president at that time, Najib-- or at least his supporters did -- felt that he should have been Dr. Mahathir's first choice. But this was not to be. They accepted the reality that the time for their Man to be the number two had yet to arrive. But Najib's fortitude and patience paid off when Abdullah chose him as Deputy Prime Minister on January 6th 2004. Whether he does become Prime Minister or not, only time will tell. Nevertheless, based on the current political scenario, Najib as Deputy Prime Minister and UMNO Deputy President, is the front-runner for the premiership and party presidency when Datuk Seri Abdullah steps down.

1

FOLLOWING IN THE FATHER'S POLITICAL FOOTSTEPS



FOLLOWING IN THE FATHER'S POLITICAL FOOTSTEPS



On his return from England in 1974 after completing his tertiary studies, Datuk Seri Mohd Najib had no problem in finding employment. As the son of a Prime Minister, he had a raft of choices. His high level of qualification as a graduate of economics from the University of Nottingham ensured he was competitive in the labour market. He could have become an administrative and diplomatic officer, or entered the private sector where his father had many contacts. Najib could even have started his own business if he wanted to. There were also the possibilities of doing post-graduate studies for Masters or Phd. Financing the studies would not be a stumbling block. His family could afford to pay for them at whatever level.

But those were not what Najib wanted after he graduated. He yearned to serve, first with the central bank, later with PETRONAS which had then been formed. Najib and several young Malay professionals, who later came to be known as the “Tuah and Jebat of PETRONAS” were the pioneers of the petroleum corporation in its formative years.

PETRONAS is actually the brainchild of Razak. The state-owned corporation has absolute power over the nation's oil reserves. Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who was the political protege of Razak himself became its first President and chief executive who had the same standing as a cabinet minister. Tengku Razaleigh was given free rein to lead the company. The Kelantanese prince was one of young rising stars in UMNO which had the confidence of the Prime Minister. Naturally

Razak expected him to coach Najib in management, while at the same time guiding Najib to pave the way for a career in politics.

Najib seemed to have settled in Petronas. His was clearly able; starting off as an executive and finally slated for the post of Public Affairs manager. He was happy in Petronas. But fate took a different course in early 1976, two years after his return home, which brought him to a whole new level.

THE DEATH OF TUN RAZAK

On January 14, 1976, the local state-owned radio and television stations suddenly interrupted normal programming to make way for the recitations of the holy Quran. At that time there were no private broadcasters. The move by RTM was puzzling at first, but the public soon realised that the readings of the holy book meant that someone of national prominence had died. The fears were confirmed when the then Deputy Prime Minister Tun Hussein Onn appeared on TV to announce the death of the Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak on January 14 in London at the age of 54, six years after being sworn in as the Premier. Tun Hussein told the nation that preparations were underway to have the remains of Tun Abdul Razak to be flown back. Tun Abdul Razak was given a state funeral and his body interred at the national mosque. Tun Dr. Ismail Abdul Rahman, who died in office at the age of 57 as Deputy Prime Minister, was the first to be laid to rest there on August 2nd 1973.

To many political observers, the passing of Tun Razak on January 14 1976 was not completely unexpected. The second Prime Minister was known to be suffering from leukemia for some time. But Razak himself kept the ailment secret from the public. Only his personal doctor and several close aides knew about it. His wife Toh Puan Rahah, his children and relatives were not told either, let alone the public, although some guessed that Tun Razak was ill. But when it was noticed that he had lost a lot of weight in mid-1975, there were quiet whispers about his health, and the public became more caring and sympathetic. It also touched off speculation about the malignancy of the cancer, with some guessing that he had a tumor in the liver, or

hepatitis, or even throat cancer, the result of a punishing work-load two years earlier.

A reliable source claimed that Tun Razak was afflicted with a glandular malfunction while another said he suffered from an unknown viral infection. Once a stocky man with a chubby face, he became gaunt in a relatively short time. It was not hard for anyone to notice the changes, and many felt there was something amiss with their Prime Minister. Many prayed that he would recover, but things took a serious turn when he was flown to London on December 18 1975 for medical treatment.

News of the events spread fast, as in those days there were no direct flights to London. The Prime Minister at that time also did not have a private jet for an immediate journey. Under such a pressing emergency, rescue came in the form of an Air France airliner which was scheduled to fly from Singapore to Paris. The plane made a detour to Kuala Lumpur in order to pick up the VIP patient and entourage bound for London. Tun Razak was admitted to a top-flight Harley Street clinic on December 22nd. There were unconfirmed reports that a doctor who examined him said he wouldn't survive past Christmas. Even at this stage Tun Razak did not want the Malaysian public to know of his predicament. The Malaysian High Commissioner in London said in a statement after Tun Razak's arrival that the Prime Minister was admitted for a viral infection. The truth was only announced after his death ; that he died of leukaemia.

The then foreign minister Tengku Ahmad Rithaudeen who arrived in London on January 13 1976, a day before the PM's demise, to discuss the upcoming Malaysia-Thai joint border committee meeting, was completely ignorant of his boss' duel with death.

Tun Razak's second son Johari, who was with his brothers Nizam and Nazim at Heathrow Airport to welcome their dad, were shocked to find out that his father had to go straight to the London Clinic in Harley Street . In writing about the experience titled *My Father's Last Days in London: A Parting Gift*, Johari said:

"After the usual greetings, I was stunned to be told that all of us were to go the clinic. I was not informed at all that he was to be hospitalised. I thought it to be odd, but then set it aside. The

clinic was situated in an unassuming building in Harley Street, an area full of the most skilled medical specialists in London. I was then told my father was to have a routine check-up.”

Tun Razak personally told Johari, who was then 21, and in his final year law exams, that the illness was just a touch of the Flu.

“He (Tun Razak) did not hint that it was a much more serious disease, let alone mention about it being fatal. As far as I knew, my father had not been admitted for treatment at any hospital before, so I did not have cause for concern that the disease was serious.”

Johari only knew the truth after Christmas, when his father's condition worsened and his personal physician Dr McPherson told him about the leukaemia in which the bone marrow produced an abnormally high amount of white blood cells.

The ailment was first diagnosed in 1969 when Tun Razak underwent physical examination back home. Since then, he had regularly flown to London secretly for treatment. But the doctors failed to live up to expectations. On January 7th Johari asked one of the specialists how long his father could last. The doctor tersely replied that Tun Razak had only a few more days to live, saying: “I don't see how your father can continue to be Prime Minister.”

While the diagnosis was devastating to Johari, he nevertheless spent quality time with his father in the remaining days, talking about things a father and his son would, such as the youth's studies. The last time they spoke to each other was on January 12 and 13. On the evening of January 13th 1976, Johari went back to his flat after his father fell asleep. But at 4.30 AM January 14, he was awakened by a call from the hospital, summoning him to his father's bedside. His father was close to death. Before rushing to hospital, he telephoned Najib in Kuala Lumpur about their father's condition. Tun Razak passed away at 11am January 14, 1976. At his side were Toh Puan Rahah and son Nizam.

Tun Razak's remains were brought to a mosque in East London for the obligatory rituals and prayers, before being transported to the Malaysian High Commission in Belgrave Square. When the body arrived in Kuala Lumpur, it was brought to the Prime Minister's official residence Sri Taman before the lying in state at Parliament. Tun Razak was given a state funeral at buried as a hero in the grounds of Masjid Negara. An outpouring of grief resulted, such as never witnessed before in the nation's history. Scores of thousands patiently queued to bid farewell to their Prime Minister. The leader who returned glory to Malaysia, was no more.

TUN RAZAK-THE DUTIFUL PM

Abdul Razak bin Hussein was born at Pulau Keladi, Pekan on March 11 1922. He was raised as a kampung boy, by his grandfather. When it came time for him to start his formal education, he enrolled at a school in Kampung Jambu, Langgar, Pekan. He studied secular subjects in the morning, and was instilled with knowledge of the Quran at the religious school in the afternoons. Although his father was a courtier at the royal palace, Razak led a childhood like any other village boy, experiencing the poverty in the rural areas, sometimes walking to and from school in bare-feet with his friends. Tan Sri Shariff Ahmad, in his book *Tun Razak Putera Titiwangsa*, wrote that Razak was a quiet boy who excelled in his studies. He continued his schooling at the Malay College Kuala Kangsar, better known as MCKK, where his excellent grades brought him academic success and awards. He was also active in sports, such as hockey and football—his favourite games.

After he completed his schooling, Razak joined the Malay Administrative Service, MAS in 1939 when he was only 17. As a MAS officer, he held various posts in his home state of Pahang. After a year as a civil servant, he was awarded a scholarship to study at Raffles College in Singapore. But his education was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. The British colonies of Malaya and Singapore were invaded by Japanese forces in 1941. When Raffles College was closed, he returned to Pahang. He then became active in the territorial army and the elite group Force 136. When the British returned to Malaya

after the war ended in 1945, Razak resumed his duties as a civil servant. In 1947, he was offered a scholarship to study Law in London. And again, he excelled academically, completing his law degree in 18 months with honours, and was admitted to the Bar in 1950. His stay in Britain as a student was a time in which he became active in politics, as did many other Malay expatriate students. He was at the forefront of the United Kingdom Malay Union, KMUK. Razak was also an avid observer of British party politics.

On his return home, Razak joined the Malayan Civil Service, MCS, during which he served in various capacities in Pahang. His most senior post was Pahang state secretary. He also served as the state's Menteri Besar briefly in 1955. Unlike today, the post of Menteri Besar was filled by the senior-most civil servant. In politics, Razak had mastered the role which he later became adept—that of the brains behind the scenes. However, he could not play a direct role in UMNO yet as he was still a civil servant. He became an UMNO member in 1950, and was elected to lead youth wing, succeeding Tun Hussein Onn.

When UMNO was embroiled in a leadership crisis following the resignation of Johor's Datuk Onn Jaafar in 1951, Tun Razak played a vital role in persuading Tunku Abdul Rahman, a prince of Kedah, whom he met in London in 1947, to lead UMNO. He and the Tunku were both active in the KMUK, the union of Malay students. If he wanted to Razak himself could offer himself as the UMNO President, but he felt he had to defer to Tunku because of the latter's royal pedigree. In the 1951 UMNO elections, The Tunku was elected President, while Tun Razak won the Deputy Presidency—the second highest post in the party. For four months, the UMNO Youth chief's post was held in an acting capacity by Datuk Ahmad Badawi (father of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi). Datuk Ahmad was succeeded by another Johor UMNO leader, Tun Sardon Jubir.

Tun Razak and Tunku Abdul Rahman proved to be an unbeatable combination whom made UMNO into a formidable political force. They transformed UMNO from a squabbling mass into a cohesive national bloc, well placed in the struggle for Malay dominance. They knew well the challenges that lay ahead. UMNO's founding father Onn Jaafar wanted the party to be open to all races, something the members vehemently rejected during the UMNO assembly of 1951. Disappointed, Onn and several of the party's leading lights quit to form

a new party, the Independence Of Malaya Party. It was a traumatic time for Malays, and if it were not for the skilful navigation of the course by the Tunku and Tun Razak, UMNO would have floundered.

On the contrary, both leaders solidified Malay unity in UMNO following the departure of some Islamic scholars who formed Parti Islam SeMalaysia, PAS. One of the prominent religious intellectual leaders Haji Ahmad Fuad had challenged Tunku Abdul Rahman and lost.

Razak pioneered the concept of the Alliance Party, a coalition of UMNO with the non-Malay parties MCA and MIC. In recognition of his role, Razak was appointed the unofficial member of the Federal Legislative Assembly in 1951, while still a civil servant. With the Tunku, Tun Razak later took part in the negotiations with the colonial power Britain for the independence of Malaya. Razak's perseverance paid dividends in 1955, when the Alliance won a landslide majority in the first general election in 1955. Razak was appointed the first education minister in the cabinet of Chief Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman.

When Malaya achieved independence on August 31, 1957, the Tunku became the first Prime Minister and he appointed Tun Razak as his deputy. Tun Razak had also held the portfolios of Education, Defence and Rural Development. When the Tunku retired from politics in September 1970 Tun Razak succeeded him, remaining the PM until his death in January 14 1976.

As a leader, Tun Razak dutifully carried out his tasks in the development of Islam, the Malays and the nation, to the extent that he was awarded the monicker the "Father Of Development". It would not be an exaggeration to say in his 26 years of politics and even earlier when he was a civil servant, he also deserved the title the Architect of Malaysia as we know it. As Education Minister, he was responsible for the formation of the national education policy for Malaya as contained in the Razak Education Report. To him, education wasn't just gaining knowledge, but a tool for national unity.

Following this, he set up national schools for all races. At the same time, he duly acknowledged the rights of the Chinese and Indians for primary schools which taught in Mandarin and Tamil as the medium of instruction. At the secondary school level, students would undergo a transitional phase in which Bahasa Malaysia eventually replaced

English as the medium of instruction. He envisioned education in fulfilling the aim of creating a Malaysian race.

As Rural Development Minister, Tun Razak was entrusted with the task of raising the living standards of the people in the countryside and hinterland, areas almost synonymous with abject poverty - but also formed the core support of UMNO . He carried out both physical and non-physical development of the rural areas. The basic infrastructures outside the major urban areas were improved; roads were built, villages electrified and telecommunications introduced. To reduce poverty, the development of idle land was initiated on a major scale with the formation of the Federal Land Development Authority, popularly known as *Felda*. Rural Malays without property were given the opportunity to become pioneers of new settlements. A literacy drive was also given priority too. Mosques and community halls were built. Affordable housing were constructed for the lower-income groups, with low-interest loans made available.

As Defence Minister, Tun Razak efficiently contained the threat from communist terrorists in the rebellion between 1948 to 1960, the period known as the Emergency. If that wasn't bad enough, he had to contend with the confrontation with Indonesia, which was resolved amicably. He was instrumental in improving bilateral ties with Jakarta, and the neighbouring states, which led to the formation of ASEAN. In secrecy, he negotiated peace which brought about the good relations between the two biggest Malay archipelago nations.

Undoubtedly, Tun Razak faced one of the greatest challenges of the nation due to the 1969 May 13 riots, following the May 10 general elections. It was an unforgettable experience for everyone and a national crisis. Tunku Abdul Rahman's role as the guardian of Malay interests was called into question. The Tunku was seen as giving in too much to the demands of the non-Malays. At that point, Tun Razak came into his own as a decisive leader who rescued the Malays from the bloody riots. Parliament was suspended. Emergency rule was declared, in the form of the National Operation Council, known by its acronym of *Mageran*. Tun Razak became the director of *Mageran* with absolute powers. It was tasked with bringing back stability and steering the nations towards reform after May 13.

Tun Razak proved to be a true democrat and the guardian of Malay rights. He could have continued indefinitely as Mageran director, ruling by decree as provided by the emergency powers. This might have happened in many other countries ; the leader reluctant to let go of absolute power. But not with Tun Razak. He governed as such for only 21 months. With stability and peace returned, Tun Razak restored parliamentary democracy and the Rule Of Law. Soon afterwards, Tunku Abdul Rahman decided to retire. On September 22nd 1970, Tun Razak was sworn in as the second Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Realising that one of the major causes of the May 13 riots was Malay dissatisfaction with their lowly economic status, he introduced the New Economic Policy, NEP. The NEP had two objectives- the eradication of poverty regardless of ethnicity, and the restructuring of society. More specifically, the NEP aimed at improving the lot of Malays by getting them to raise their share of the economic pie from 2.4% in 1969 to at least 30% in 1990. It was planned as such that the non-Malays and foreign investors with huge holdings in Malaysia would not be deprived of their share despite the planned increase in the allocation for Malays. This was done by enlarging the economic pie and increasing Bumiputera equity ownership in the private sector. Efforts to persuade Malays to invest in equities were started on a small scale.

Under the NEP, a class of Malay professionals was also envisaged to grow to at least 30% within the same time frame. Research and Development was used specifically for that purpose. More Malays were sent overseas for tertiary and post-graduate studies with scholarships. At the same time, more local public universities were founded. A system of quotas was introduced to provide affirmative action for bumiputeras in local universities to redress the previous imbalance of races, which put Malays at a clear disadvantage.

Sensitive issues raised by politicians were prohibited, as campaigning for the 1969 May 10 general election showed that racial matters inflamed hatred and suspicions. As such the Sedition Act was amended to ban anyone from questioning the status of the Malay language as the official language, the privileges of the Malays and Bumiputeras, and the status of the hereditary Malay rulers. The

Rukunegara with its five principles was introduced as the foundation of national unity. The national education policy, which had been applied inconsistently, was reformed. The transition of English language medium to Bahasa Malaysia in schools was stepped up, making the national language the only medium of instruction at secondary and tertiary levels. The dream of a having a national university was realised by Tun Razak when Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia was set up.

In politics, Tun Razak strived for a new concensus. Emphasizing political stability for a multi-cultural nation, he invited opposition parties to work with the Alliance in government. Initially, this came about in the form of a coalition state government in Penang, between the Alliance and Gerakan. Similarly, in Kelantan there was a bipartisan government of the Alliance and PAS. A coalition government at federal level was also introduced. This lay the foundations for the institutionalization of the Barisan Nasional, BN government as we know of it today. Voters first came to know the BN in the 1974 general elections. With the exception of the DAP, all the opposition parties at state and parliamentary levels joined the BN founded by Tun Razak. The founding members were UMNO, MCA and MIC, along with PAS, Gerakan and PPP.

In foreign policy, Tun Razak pursued a more neutral, role and discarded the previous pro-Western and anti-Communist stance in the nation's interaction with the rest of the world. Malaysia under Tun Razak became non-alligned. Relations with countries regardless of ideologies of the respective governments. With the internal communist threat greatly diminished, the stage was set for the enlarging of ties with the rest of the world. The Cold War was in decline and a climate of Detente was the new attitude worldwide. The stereotypical images of democracy/ capitalism against communism, were wearing thin. Tun Razak rightly concluded that nothing should be seen as black and white any more. It was no longer sensible to pursue a pro-Western policy, rather more pragmatic steps in line with the changes sweeping the globe at that time.

But this did not mean Malaysia would sacrifice its core values as a sovereign and independent nation. Based on mutual respect and non-interference in each others' affairs, Kuala Lumpur recognised Beijing as the only China, something that was almost unthinkable

earlier. Malaysia made it abundantly clear to China that Beijing must not support the Communist Party of Malaya in any way, as one of the conditions for diplomatic ties.

It was clear that as a leader, Najib's father held a lot of prestige in developing the nation. Under Tun Razak, the status of the Malays had been greatly enhanced compared to the time when they were outcasts in their own land. Special privileges to raise the living standards of the Malays in many sectors, guaranteed under the constitution, were implemented efficiently. After independence until the race riots of May 13 1969, the privileges were subject to the vagaries of the free market system. But after Tun Razak took over in September 20 1970, the affirmation of the rights of the Malays was carried out unapologetically. Economic growth with fair distribution of wealth became the core of Malaysia's development. Positive discrimination came full circle.

Under Tun Razak Malay dominance in politics was further strengthened within the BN. UMNO became the backbone of the ruling party, and not just a first among equals as had been practised earlier in the Alliance. The key cabinet portfolios such as Finance and Trade, which had been held by MCA stalwarts, were reverted to UMNO. The other BN component parties accepted the changes. The development of a Malaysian race was linked to a new National Education Policy, while the Rukun Negara became the guiding principles for all citizens regardless of race or creed. So that was Tun Razak, the second Prime Minister of Malaysia, father of Datuk Seri Mohd Najib, who is now Deputy Prime Minister.

TUN RAHAH - THE FIRST LADY OF THE NATION

Rahah married Razak on September 4, 1952, when he was Pahang state secretary and working in Kuala Lipis, at that time the state capital. Razak met her through a mutual friend, the late Tan Sri Taib Andak, whom he met in London. Razak's father Hussein wrote to Taib asking the latter to find a match for his son, who was already 30. Hussein, for reasons yet unknown, wanted his son to pair up with a Johor lass. Taib suggested Rahah, daughter of Mohamad Noah, the then Johor UMNO chairman. Rahah was 19, a form five student in Johor Bharu.

During a visit to the state UMNO headquarters, Razak was taken aside by Taib who drew his attention to Rahah from a distance while she was returning home from school. On the pretext of fetching his daughter Kalsom from the same school, Taib Andak brought Razak along, who was smitten by Rahah. They courted with the blessings of Rahah's parents.

However, Rahah was not entirely unaware of their elders' plan. She was shown a photo of Razak by Taib beforehand. Filial piety dictated that Rahah complied with her parents' wishes. The couple were engaged for nine months before they tied the knot in 1952. Throughout the engagement, Rahah wrote in her memoirs *A Heart Easily Won* about only going on dates three times with Razak, all at Singapore and they were always chaperoned by Rahah's elder sister. She admitted that after viewing the photo she thought Razak was handsome. She wrote:

"I considered him good-looking - young and slim. My sisters Suhaila and Cik Teh, had also been matched without meeting their fiancées and they were happily married. I have complete faith in my parents, although my mother had reservations earlier because I had to settle down in Pahang, which to her was a foreign place. I felt that my parents knew what was best for me and I accepted it."

After their wedding, they set up a home in Kuala Lipis where Tun Razak was working. Ten months after they married, they were blessed with their first son - Mohd Najib. They had four more children - all sons. They are Ahmad Johari, Mohd Nizam, Mohd Nazim and Mohd Nazir. The couple also adopted four girls. As far as it is known, Tun Rahah was never active in politics. She has always been a housewife and home-maker, and focused fully on her family. As she was the wife of a very senior official and later Prime Minister, the thought of having a career outside the home did not arise. She comes from a prominent political family. Her father Tun Mohd Noah had been Dewan Rakyat Assembly Speaker in 1959. When he retired from politics, Tun Mohd Noah became active in business. The Genting resort is one of his pet projects.

As a housewife, she concentrated on raising her children. After Tun Razak's death, she bore the sole responsibility of managing the

family, especially the other four children who were still in school. Najib by then had completed his studies and was already working. Johari was in his final year law while Nizam and Nazim were at boarding school in England and Nazir was still in primary school. Rahah must have been grateful as all of her children have been successful in their education and subsequent careers. Ahmad Johari is a lawyer and graduate of the University Of Kent and now a prominent businessman. Mohd Nizam has a degree in politics, economics and philisophy from one of the world's foremost universities - Oxford. Mohd Nazim who was born on March 25, 1962 and became a renowned architect and is now in business. The youngest son Mohd Nazir graduated from the University of Bristol and University of Cambridge and is a leading corporate figure. He is the CEO of Commerce International Merchant Bank, CIMB. But among the five sons, only Najib entered politics and followed his father's footsteps.

TAKING THE PLUNGE INTO POLITICS

As the eldest of Tun Razak's children, Najib inherited his father's position as one of four courtiers in the Pahang palace with the title Orang Kaya Indera Shahbandar. The position brings with it the honorific title Dato' Sri to Najib. However, Najib not only inherited the traditional honour from his father, but also the parliamentary seat which Tun Razak held. This is due to Razak's service to the state and nation. Pahang UMNO unanimously agreed for Najib to stand for election as the MP for Pekan to succeed his father. Of course, in the beginning, apart from Najib, there was Anwar Jusoh, his father's political secretary who was also mentioned as a possible candidate for the Pekan seat. Anwar also has blood ties with Najib. Anwar's elder brother, who was the Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Mohamad Jusoh, incidentally is also his uncle on his father's side. Mohamad married Razak's sister Maimunah and had lobbied the candidacy of his younger brother. As an aide to Razak, Anwar was deemed to be more senior than Najib. But the sentiments and voices backing Najib for his father's position were very strong among UMNO stalwarts.

Even the Sultan of Pahang Sultan Ahmad Shah-- who shouldn't be involved in politics-- gave the royal ascent to Najib. His Highness considered Najib as a true scion of Pahang and Pekan who had done much for the state and nation. In extolling Najib's qualities, his majesty did not hide his feelings about wanting Najib to step into Razak's shoes. Najib also got strong backing from another of his uncles, Tan Sri Hamzah Abu Samah who was then Pahang UMNO liaison chairman. Taking into account the endorsement the party acting president Tun Hussein Onn, who is also Najib's uncle on his mother's side (Hussein married Rahah's elder sister, Suhaila), Najib relented. Najib thus was unanimously nominated as the new candidate for the Pekan seat.

Najib, who was then aged 22 years and 7 months, agreed. While some thought him to be too young and inexperienced, his political pedigree and legacy made him a heavyweight. While still young, Najib nevertheless knew that his father's contemporaries and comrade-in-arms would guide him. His father's reputation and name would also rub off onto him. Moreover, there was nothing for Najib to be too concerned about. The figure who succeeded his father as Prime Minister, is Hussein Onn, and uncle. Hussein's wife Toh Puan Suhaila is his mother's elder sister. There was also another uncle, Hamzah Abu Samah, who was in the cabinet and a Pahang UMNO stalwart. Hamzah married one of Razak's younger siblings, Zainon. As a neophyte in politics, Najib also depended on them, but had the opportunity to build a base for himself. It was generally recognised that Najib learned fast about politics when thrust into the limelight.

In several interviews with this writer when Najib returned to the federal government as Youth and Sports Minister, he was asked about the early years while he was beginning his political career, which was published in the *Utusan Malaysia*. Najib explained:

"I was jittery at first because I was thrown into the deep end of the pool, which decided whether I would sink or swim. I new the risks were enormous. But since I was small I had the will to persevere as a politician because that was the best way to serve the people. Serving the people would be the best avenue to change people's lives for the better. It was already part of me because I saw that through politics I could gain the satisfaction of seeing

that I had helped people, which were more fulfilling than other ways.” (See Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak, in Chamil Wariya, Pandangan Politik Era Mahathir, section 105, Fajar Bakti publishers, 1990).

Najib explained further:

“So, based on this awareness, I was interested in being active in politics. But not when I was still young. Furthermore my late father had distinguished himself that way, especially as he was the Prime Minister at that time. When he passed away in 1976, I was at the cross-roads in my career ; choose between politics or as an executive while learning the ropes about politics with the possibility that one day I would enter politics full time. It took quite some time to make a decision. Finally, I came to the conclusion to serve the party and I told the leadership of my willingness although I myself did not know whether I would be elected.”

Nevertheless, in making the ultimate decision, Najib left it to the leadership because he did not want to be accused of being an upstart who used his father’s name. While he was interested in politics, Najib did not take the plunge immediately on his return from his studies in Britain. Razak himself wanted his son Najib to be a professional. Najib remembered it well:

“My late father wanted me to be an accountant, and maybe start my own firm as he probably did not want me to go into politics because of the intense pressure. It would be easier to become a professional, without the added burden.”

The same story was told by Najib to a group of journalists from *Mingguan Malaysia* when he was appointed Deputy Prime Minister which was published on January 11, 2004.

The journalists asked Najib about his late father’s wishes if he still wanted to go into politics. Najib explicitly said that Tun Razak did not express any particular wish “other than telling me to study hard.” Najib said his father wanted him to be a successful corporate executive by

being a graduate with a professional degree.

“I never thought he would forbid me to make a career in politics. He really wanted me to be an accountant. His role model for me at that time was the late Raslan, the first chairman of Bank Bumiputera Berhad.”

So, while Najib was already interested in politics, his ideas had to be set aside for the moment because, he said, “If I use my father’s aura, I would be scrutinised so much, that I would not be recognised for my own merit . One day I would be labeled (as the prime minister’s son). That would stick on me when I go into a branch or division. That was probably what prevented me from being active politically early on. It would also raise various interpretations.”

But Najib could not stop fate. After being elected as the Member of Parliament for Pekan uncontested in February 21st 1976, Najib began his apprenticeship in politics. He was not brought immediately into cabinet although his uncle was the prime minister. Instead, he started from the bottom, As soon as he earned the honorific Yang Berhormat, Najib was entrusted with the task of becoming the chairman of Maju Ternak Negara - a livestock and dairy entity that was later liquidated. In the 1978 general elections, Najib successfully defended his Pekan seat. As a young and talented leader full of potential, who was groomed for national leadership in the coming years, he was given a place in the administration at a higher level.

He was appointed a deputy minister - at first with the energy, Telecoms and Communications ministry, later at the ministries of Education and then Finance. Naturally, he was there to assist the ministers in administration, while learning the ropes of politics in greater detail. According to those in the know about Najib’s political career, he made full use of the opportunities available to hone his skills in leadership which was already inherent.

Compared to other young leaders of that time, Najib had some advantages. He was aware about politics since childhood because of being born into one of Pahang’s and Johor’s leading families. On his father’s side of the family, he came from a long line of Pahang courtiers. His father, Razak, apart from inheriting the title, was active in state,

national and international politics. His maternal grandfather, Noah, was an early political activist who later became the first Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat.

Najib admitted that by going into politics with his distinguished family background, he was carrying a heavy burden. He said:

“If I was was an ordinary person, I might not think I was carrying a burden. But because of my breeding and my family, and due to my father’s demise which grieved me so, a lot was expected of me. I realised that I might not live up to expectations. But I also did not think much of failure or the risks I was taking. I wanted to serve and I was willing to face the possibilities. Looking back, I thought that if I had not made the decision, it would be much more difficult five or ten years later. The door of opportunity might not be open as wide when my father passed away. As they say in politics, people’s memories are short. If there is an opportunity and with a little bit of luck and with Allah’s blessings, we should persevere and take the opportunity to serve as best as possible.”

With his indomitable spirit, Najib inherited his father’s political acumen. Although he might have entered on his father’s name, political observers agree that not long afterwards, Najib emerged from Razak’s shadow. He could stand on his own to step up the ladder of hierarchy in party and government. In giving a place to Najib, the leadership no longer saw him as an excuse to be given posts because of his father. He emerged as a full-fledged politician because of his abilities. As for performance, he has almost at where his father had been.

Najib’s chances to equal the record are good. He achieved them not because of his father Razak, but because he was recognised as an outstanding minister in whatever portfolio he handled. As Deputy Prime Minister, political observers concur that he is just one step away from becoming Prime Minister. If he does, he would be the first prime minister to repeat his father’s achievement in modern political history. But before reaching his present position, his political leadership had been severely tested. His first test was when he was sent to his home state to become Menteri Besar in the 1982 general elections.

2

STABILISING PAHANG POLITICS



STABILISING PAHANG POLITICS



After six years as Pekan MP, during the 1982 general election, Datuk Seri Mohd Najib was nominated as candidate by the BN leadership for the Pekan state seat. As predicted, after his victory he was appointed the new Pahang Menteri Besar. He took over the duties that the acting MB Datuk Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman performed. Rashid was appointed Deputy Menteri Besar under the new state executive committee. Rashid became acting Menteri Besar following the resignation of Datuk Rahim Abu Bakar, who didn't see eye-to-eye with the Pahang Sultan, six months before the general elections. In the polling Rashid was offered to stand as candidate for a parliamentary seat with the promise that he would be appointed Deputy Minister. However Rashid requested to maintain his state seat and hinted that he was willing to be Deputy Menteri Besar.

This showed that the decision to bring Najib back to Pahang as Menteri Besar was not without reason. It was aimed at stabilising Pahang politics and resolve the crisis with the palace. The question is: Why did the Rahim-Sultan crisis occur? Will Najib succeed in his mission to ease the tensions with the palace and stabilise Pahang politics? As a young politician who was then 29, this had been the biggest test so far.

RAHIM BAKAR'S CRISIS WITH THE PALACE

The rift between Rahim and Sultan Ahmad Shah grew into a crisis which could no longer be kept under wraps. It started when Rahim was nominated to be Menteri Besar after the 1978 general election. His predecessor Datuk Mohammad Jusoh did not stand in the elections. Although several names were suggested to be his successor, the matter was still a subject to conjecture. According to Rahim Bakar himself one of the favoured candidates was Abdul Razak Hitam. But this became a controversial choice early on as Abdul Razak was heavily criticised by some who were envious of him. Poison-pen letters alleging his misdeeds -- whether real or imagined -- had been distributed. The leadership finally took the safe course and sidelined Razak Hitam.

It was in this situation that Rahim's name was mentioned as candidate for Menteri Besar. He himself didn't anticipate the post. After the 1978 general election, he only hoped for a seat on the state executive council. The request was not unrealistic as he was a relative newcomer to politics in Pahang. Many UMNO veterans also aspired to be Menteri Besar.

Hussein Onn's choice of Rahim could have been influenced by several factors. Apart from being a neophyte with a clean record, Rahim was also a manager who was skilled and dedicated. After the elections, Hussein also carried out a policy of bringing new blood into certain positions as the second-tier to be groomed as future front-line leaders. In Negeri Sembilan, a rising young politician Rais Yatim was named as Menteri Besar early on. In Melaka, another young hopeful Rahim Thamby Chik was appointed Chief Minister. The choice of Rahim, who was then 34, was in line with this policy. Probably they wanted to cut their teeth in leadership so that they could succeed in higher positions at a later stage.

The Sultan Of Pahang Sultan Ahmad Shah, as a constitutional ruler, was known to have taken a keen interest in the process of filling the Menteri Besar's post in his state. The state constitution provided for some discretion in appointing the top executive. But as pointed out by some political observers, His Highness cannot carry out his wish on his own without advice from the party in power. It's nomination of a candidate cannot be totally overruled by the Sultan unless he has

a very good reason. As candidates were considered for the Menteri Besar's post after the 1978 general election, the Sultan was said to have asked Tan Sri Hamzah Abu Samah, who was then a federal minister and Pahang UMNO liaison chairman, to submit more than one name. His Highness then reportedly used his powers of discretion to appoint his choice from the list.

Hamzah, however, did not comply with His Highness' wishes, not because he didn't want to, but because UMNO President Hussein Onn insisted that only one name be submitted to the Ruler. Whether he liked it or not, The Sultan obliged. For Hussein, the Menteri Besar's post, in any state, is not the prerogative of the Sultan, but the party in power in line with parliamentary democracy and the constitutional monarchy of the nation. For the Sultan, the Sultan only needs to give the royal assent to the nomination. So, in such a scenario, the problem with Rahim and the Sultan started before the former even became Menteri Besar. His appointment had sparked a controversy. After becoming Menteri Besar, other glitches and niggles surfaced resulting in their ties being further strained. These included the way Rahim entertained requests and commands from the Sultan from time to time; believed to be instigated by those envious of Rahim, but more of this later.

TO GIVE IN OR...

Rahim's audacity before the Pahang Sultan when he was Menteri Besar caused him to be labeled as two-faced. Within pro-sultan circles, Rahim was seen as a traitor. He became the modern Hang Jebat who dared to say "no" to the ruler. Within those who believed in a constitutional monarchy, Rahim was a champion and a model Menteri Besar to his counterparts in other states in dealing with their respective rulers. His moves, however, depended a lot on the backing of state UMNO and the national leadership. Without the support, he couldn't do what he did.

As much as his stand during the crisis showed him to be progressive, at heart, however, he was conservative in dealings with the Sultan. In an interview, he said although he was critical of the Sultan, but that did not mean he was in favour of getting rid of the ruler.

“I didn’t want the institution (of constitutional monarchy) to be compromised. It’s simple. To me the Malay definition covers the rulers. They are part of the Malay world. As a campaigner for the Malay cause, I do not want to see the Sultans toppled.”

But accepting the royal authority did not mean that the ruler could do as he pleased. Rahim was all for constitutional monarchy. He said,

“What I didn’t agree to is the antics and irrational behaviour of the sultan in several aspects including involvement in business and meddling in politics.”

Rahim’s principles in dealing with the Sultan remains, and not only when he was Menteri Besar. Although he was at odds with the monarch, Rahim explained:

“I had never disobeyed the Sultan. When summoned for an audience, I came. There is no record of me refusing to attend an audience. As a matter of fact, even during the crisis, I had sought audiences, but was refused. I am consistent on this. Whether its right or wrong is another matter. Whether I am right in interpreting that the monarchs are part and parcel of the Malays, is a matter of opinion. Others might not agree. But then, that’s me.”

With this understanding of Rahim’s principles, it becomes clear why he strongly defended parliamentary democracy that transferred power to the people. Whether he is a champion or a traitor, depends on interpretation. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Rahim contributed to parliamentary democracy and the constitutional monarchy.

RAHIM BAKAR'S CHOICE

When confronted with the problems with the Sultan at the early stages, Rahim admitted that there were opportunities to diffuse the situation. The Pahang Sultan, according to Rahim, wanted a Menteri Besar who listened to him; one who is willing to serve his interests. In such circumstances, Rahim could do two things.

First, be a Menteri Besar who satisfies all the whims of the Sultan and complies with all His Highness' demands. In this way, Rahim will be popular at the palace. He knows there were such Menteris Besar. Their political future was more secure. They would stand a better chance to remain as Menteri Besar.

Rahim Bakar, however, did not choose that path. He chose the second path; be a Menteri Besar working under parliamentary democracy and the constitutional monarchy. He did not want to surrender the powers of the people who had acquired them rightfully through elections, to an institution that was clearly undemocratic. But that did not mean he didn't entertain the requests of the Sultan at all. Some were fulfilled, but not a hundred percent.

Other than the influence of parliamentary democracy, what Rahim did was totally in synch with the directives from Hussein Onn to all Menteris Besar and Chief Ministers in their respective states. According to Rahim, one of Hussein's directives was for them to refer all requests from the Sultans to the Prime Minister, whether about acquiring land, logging rights, business licences or others. Rahim obeyed explicitly. But some Menteris Besar did not. As Hussein himself was so busy with the duties of running the whole country, he did not have time to check whether his orders were followed. In the final analysis, it was the discretion of the Menteri Besar to obey the Sultan or not.

When Rahim decided to hold fast with the directives from the Prime Minister on dealing with requests from the rulers, the palace became uneasy. The result was that the estrangement between him and the Sultan worsened. He was no longer summoned for audiences. On His Highness' birthday, the Menteri Besar no longer was invited to swear the oath of allegiance. This occurred in 1980 and 1981. During the birthday celebrations in 1980, Rahim was invited, but did not address His Highness. Rahim was also not accorded the privileges of a

Menteri Besar. During the function, Rahim's seat was not at the main table next to the Sultan or the Tengku Mahkota (Crown Prince) where it should be according to protocol. He was relegated to the masses. He was not allowed into the banquet hall through the VIP's door. In deference to the monarch, Rahim relented.

During the following year's royal birthday festivities, Rahim was not invited at all. This proved to be the point of no return as far as relations with the palace was concerned. He felt humiliated as during the 1981 celebrations, he had returned earlier from the Haj in the Holy land in order to attend the function. He felt he was in dereliction of his duties as Menteri Besar as he could not be with the Sultan for the birthday. The first thing he did on his arrival back home was to contact the palace to confirm his invitation. When told there was none, he went on a holiday to Kelantan with his family. Soon after, Rahim resigned as Menteri Besar. His resignation seemed inevitable, due to the complete breakdown in ties with the palace at that point. As Menteri Besar, he no longer was invited to the Sultan's functions. In effect, he became a lame-duck Menteri Besar. He could no longer carry out his duties properly.

At the same time, the constitutional crisis was triggered off in Pahang. Two bills before the state assembly - on forest management and allowances for state assemblymen - had not received the royal ascent in order to be passed as law. However, the Sultan denied he was reluctant to sign the bills, as it would be unconstitutional not to give the royal ascent. His Highness only remained silent as if to stall the proceedings. Technically, it did not contradict the constitution as the charter did not specify a time-frame for the bill to be approved into law. The state constitution only mentioned that the royal ascent be given after being passed by the state assembly on advice from the government. There was no time limit for the process, so what happened did not violate the charter. But some thought that if any Sultan does not give the royal ascent in a "reasonable" period of time, it would be unconstitutional.

The Sultan of Pahang was said to have done so deliberately to pressure UMNO to terminate Rahim's tenure. Side-lining him from all palace functions attended by the Sultan indicated that Rahim was no longer wanted as Menteri Besar. In this struggle, the Sultan succeeded. By the end of 1981, Rahim formally resigned, and was given leave to study overseas.

SACRIFICIAL LAMB TO CHANGES OF NATIONAL LEADERSHIP?

Rahim's problems with the Sultan was said to have started when he became Menteri Besar. By any standards, he didn't last long on the job. But the fact that he persevered as Menteri Besar for nearly four years is a remarkable record, considering what he had to go through. But questions were raised as to why he resigned suddenly at the end of 1981, just months before the 1982 general elections.

It cannot be denied that the answer lay with the leadership changes within UMNO and the federal government. As of July 16 1981, the reins of party and government were handed over to Datuk Seri (now Tun) Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. He succeeded Hussein Onn who retired for health reasons. Hussein had placed Rahim in the Pahang Menteri Besar's seat. Hussein stood by Rahim when the MB couldn't get along with the Sultan. Hussein refused to bow to the Sultan's demand that Rahim be replaced, determined to uphold the constitutional monarchy in its true form. Despite repeated demands, he held fast for Rahim to carry out the necessary tasks.

The emergence of Dr. Mahathir as Prime Minister and UMNO President in national politics, however, signaled a change for Rahim's fortunes. For the first few months, the New Prime Minister seemed to be defending the embattled Menteri Besar. Like Hussein before him, Dr. Mahathir also emphasised on constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. There was more effort to defend the pillars of democracy compared to UMNO leaders. Support given to another Menteri Besar Othman Saat of Johor at that time was an indication of Dr. Mahathir's determination to discipline the hereditary Malay rulers so that they would not deviate from their responsibilities as sultans without temporal power.

The unyielding manner which the government displayed in setting a period in which a bill in parliament or state assembly will automatically become law even if the monarch does not give the royal ascent showed how serious it was in clearly defining the limits of the rulers. Dr Mahathir's reluctance to bow to pressure from the Sultan of Kelantan who did not want Tan Sri Mohammad Yaacob as Menteri

Besar was proof that UMNO would rather risk losing the state than go along with interference in politics from the monarch.

In view of this, Dr. Mahathir was expected to defend Rahim in the altercation with the Pahang Sultan, who coincidentally became the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong. So it seemed to be for some months, but by the end of 1981 things changed and Dr Mahathir maintained his stand, but that ended when he conceded to the Pahang Sultan. The Prime Minister asked Rahim to resign as Menteri Besar, an office which he held since 1978. Some thought the move by Dr. Mahathir was inconsistent with his principles of preserving the Rule of Law - showing double standards. With the other rulers, he was firm. Probably the fact that the Pahang Sultan was also the then Yang Di-Pertuan Agong was the exception to the case.

But domestic political observers thought Dr. Mahathir had an agenda in allowing the Pahang ruler to get his way with Rahim. It was not a climb-down in the Prime Minister's efforts to maintain constitutional rule. Rather, he wanted to be amicable with the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong so that the government could carry on with its responsibilities in the optimum environment. Dr. Mahathir himself had barely taken office, and he didn't want to have a face-off with the King as it could weaken his position. Moreover, Dr. Mahathir was known to be friendly with the Pahang Sultan before the ruler ascended to the federal throne. That was not the case with Kelantan and Johor.

While it looked like a cop out, Dr. Mahathir was applauded for sacrificing Rahim's political career for the sake of the highest office in the land. The Prime Minister did not want to antagonise people who could jeopardise his national plans. If Rahim stood in the way, it was sensible that he be removed. Whether it was consistent with Dr. Mahathir's campaign for parliamentary democracy is another matter. What was more important is that Dr. Mahathir's position as Prime Minister then was still at its early stage.

So in order to achieve that end, Rahim, who was a champion of parliamentary democracy, had to become the sacrificial lamb -- someone who became expandable in the change of national leadership. It could have been different if Hussein Onn was still Prime Minister.

But some disagreed. They argued that even if Hussein did not step down, Rahim's position would still be untenable, as the rift had become

so deep it almost bordered on a constitutional crisis. Two bills before the state assembly were not given the royal ascent, setting the stage for further snubs for the legislative chamber. Given the trend, it would be near impossible for the state government to function properly. Furthermore, Rahim was already persona non-grata at the palace, and the monarch refused to see him. Hussein would not have much of a choice either if he was still in power, according to the observers. If the chief executive of the state does not get any cooperation with the palace, the only sensible thing to do is for the Menteri Besar to stand down. The monarch, on the other hand, is immune from having to back off.

When Dr. Mahathir took over the reins of power, he would visualise himself in a similar situation, on which he would be advised to stand down. However, he would not take such as a drastic step, as it would be contrary to the preservation of parliamentary democracy. Nevertheless, in a struggle, it is sometimes better to take one step backwards in order to take two steps forward.

In the following years, Dr. Mahathir was unyielding in disciplining the Malay rulers so as not to stray from the constitutional monarchy. After the defeat of UMNO in Kelantan in the 1990 general elections due in part to the Sultan meddling in politics, Dr. Mahathir stepped up the campaign. He allowed the UMNO general assembly to debate the issue of the violation of constitutional monarchy, and delegates berated the rulers in public - an unprecedented move. In the 1991 party general assembly, the matter was again raised. UMNO then drafted a memorandum which was then presented to the Malay rulers. It was agreed that a Code Of Ethics for the sultans be laid down and clarify the do's and dont's for the rulers with regards to business, intervention in administration, the use of the media and so on. The code was later accepted as the Declaration Of The Principles Of The Constitution.

RESOLVING POLITICAL TENSIONS STRENGTHENED THE ADMINISTRATION

It was clear that the appointment of Najib as Pahang Menteri Besar had ended the rift between UMNO and the Pahang palace. Immediately,

ties between the chief executive and the palace improved. The appointment of acting Menteri Besar Datuk Rashid had substantially changed the equation in relations between the government and the Sultan. Najib's entry came like a breath of fresh air. The rooster had returned home to roost. Although only 29, Najib was eagerly accepted by the ruler as one of the four hereditary palace courtiers, like his father before him. The Sultan changed overnight, respecting the office of the Menteri Besar which held the people's power in trust. His Highness accepted that the ruler must accept the advice of the Menteri Besar. Najib had his way in convincing the Pahang Sultan of the realpolitik of the state.

The result was that in his four-year tenure as Menteri Besar he did not have any serious disagreements with the Sultan. Najib handled well the crisis between the Malay rulers and national leadership in 1984 following the amendment to the federal constitution to clarify the definition of constitutional monarchy. The Pahang Sultan, who was also the King, seemed to understand that what the Prime Minister was doing was not to destroy the monarchy but to strengthen it. So His Highness was not antagonistic towards Najib who with Dr. Mahathir were amending the federal charter. The Sultan's respect for Najib was not jeopardised at all.

His good ties with the palace helped Najib stabilise the post-Rahim politics in Pahang. When Rahim was Menteri Besar there were certain quarters within UMNO who fanned the fires of confrontation. Some of them were uneasy with Rahim's conduct in his dealings with the ruler. Rahim was seen as a leftist in Pahang and he faced his political foes who wanted to take advantage of the situation to topple him. Several politicians in Pahang who were rather ambitious were known to be keen in seeing Rahim replaced as Menteri Besar. Some even went as far as to lobby for the post directly to the Sultan.

Apart from that the trauma and the consequences of Rahim being replaced triggered off the politics of parochialism in Pahang - between east and west. East constituted Kuantan, Pekan, Rompin while west covered Kuala Lipis, Raub, Temerloh and Bentong. The respective politicians of both factions sides competed for power in the state. So, if someone from the eastern region became Menteri Besar, a politician from the western part would be appointed Deputy Menteri Besar. The allocation of seats for the executive council would also be divided

evenly between the two regions to avoid open confrontation. There were signs that following the crisis, the political upheaval would have been even more acute if it were not for Rahim's exit.

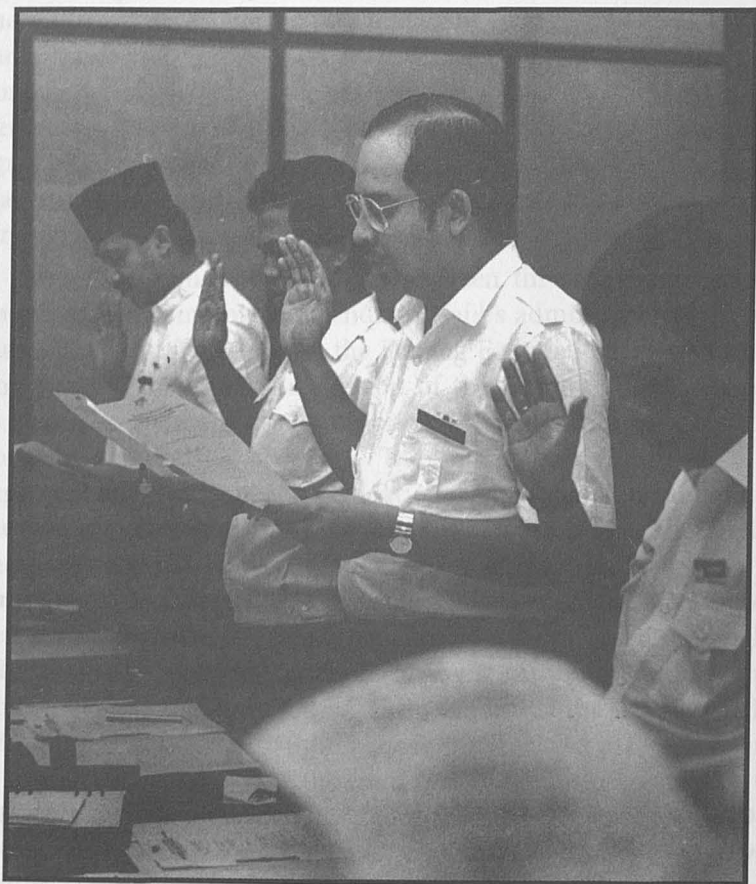
However, Najib's presence as the leader of the state, according to Datuk Faisal Abdullah who was then Pahang UMNO executive secretary, changed everything. Datuk Faisal said the dispute between the eastern and western regions was resolved. Both sides accepted Najib's authority. This could be due to Najib's ties with both east and west Pahang. Although his grassroots might be east, he was born in Kuala Lipis. Consequently the western faction saw him as one of them. With the dispute resolved, Pahang UMNO politics became more stable and productive. During Najib's administration, Pahang contributed six leaders to the party supreme council. It was not only a personal achievement of Najib, but also a reminder that he could unite squabbling factions. The political stability enjoyed by Pahang enabled Najib to focus on infrastructure development of the Malay peninsula's largest state, and strengthened his administration for public benefit.

The development of the model citizen through education was one of the most important agenda in Najib's administration. He was instrumental in setting up the Pahang Foundation in 1982 under Enactment 6/82. The main mission of the Pahang Foundation was to raise the standard of education, sports and increase education opportunities for its residents. The mission began in 1983. As explained on its web-site the foundation during Najib's administration showed the state government's commitment to aiding the welfare and education at all levels - from primary through tertiary. With the formation of Yayasan Pahang, the role of the three separate institutions that sponsored students came to a close. There had been the Higher Education Scholarship Board for Pahang students to continue their education in public universities. The second was the Islamic Higher Education Scholarship Board for those who secured places in Cairo's Al-Azhar University, while the third was the finance unit under the state secretary. The Pahang Foundation, which Najib founded in 1982, became an umbrella for thousands of the state's residents who were willing to learn new skills in various fields. The foundation now has its own education institution in Kuantan with branches in other parts of the states. Revenue for the foundation comes from business through its own holding company.

Apart from setting up the Pahang Foundation, Najib also made state-owned companies and their subsidiaries more efficient. New firms were also initiated to harvest the wealth of the state's natural resources, such as timber. New land settlements were opened up with the cooperation of Felda. While it provided landless peasants with their own patch of property, the settlements also provided opportunities to settlers from other states to come and start afresh in Pahang and make a good living for themselves.

3

YOUTH WING POLITICS – THE STRUGGLE



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When Datuk Seri Najib Razak was anointed as Deputy UMNO President at the party general assembly on September 23, 2004, he had already been in politics for 28 years. 17 of those 28 years were spent in UMNO Youth. Starting as an ordinary exco in 1978, he was elected as youth wing head in 1988 after being acting chief since 1987, after Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim decided to contest for a Vice-President's post. Najib who was then UMNO deputy head, automatically was promoted to be the acting head. When UMNO was declared illegal by the courts in early 1988, but revived soon afterwards, Najib was appointed head of its Youth wing in the new UMNO by party president Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. At that time, in the structure of the revived party, the posts of the Youth and Wanita wings were appointments of the party president, and not yet up for election. However, soon afterwards the party constitution was amended to restore the provisions of elected posts in both movements in 1989. At the party elections that year, Najib was elected head of the Youth movement. In 1993, he bade farewell to the movement when he went for one of the Vice-President's posts.

RIISING THROUGH THE RANKS

Najib's politics in UMNO Youth - at divisional and national levels - started from the ground up. Apart from being deputy head of the Pekan division between 1982 to 1990, he also led the same division's Youth wing. He took a more active role at the party's national stage earlier, in 1978 when he was elected as an exco member of the Youth wing. At federal level he served under the leadership of both Datuk Suhaimi Kamaruddin and Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. In UMNO Youth, Najib had never sought promotion through leadership challenges and stepping on anyone's toes. He merely offered himself as a candidate for a higher post, whenever a vacancy occurred and was confident of receiving the necessary support from members. For example, he offered himself for the post of Vice Head after there was an empty seat. That was why when there were efforts to oust Datuk Suhaimi as UMNO Youth head in 1982, Najib was not the rallying point for those who had vested interests in the party.

The anti-Suhaimi faction first tried to rally around Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in 1982. However, Abdullah was advised by his mother not to go for the post and focus on his new job as Pulau Pinang UMNO Liaison Chairman and minister in the Prime Minister's Department. When Abdullah declined, Anwar Ibrahim, who had only recently joined UMNO, was nominated by that faction. As far as it was known, Najib had never been used by the group to challenge Suhaimi. What he did was to offer himself for the deputy head's post - a position which he won without contest. When Anwar vacated the post, Najib as his deputy automatically became Acting Head - although some among Anwar supporters were suspicious of Najib as the head. Najib was vindicated later when the Youth General Assembly unanimously endorsed him as Youth head. Najib is the ninth UMNO Youth Head. Those who came before him were Tun Hussein Onn, Tun Razak Hussein, Tun Sardon Jubir, Tan Sri Senu Abdul Rahman, Datuk Seri Harun Idris, Tan Sri Jaafar Albar, Datuk Suhaimi Kamaruddin, and Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. Under every leader, the UMNO Youth movement played a key role as the the loyal lieutenant of the party. Najib must have known this legacy.

UMNO YOUTH BEFORE NAJIB

Najib's long association with UMNO Youth naturally enabled him to understand the hurly-burly and boisterousness of UMNO politics in general and UMNO Youth in particular. He realised that the Youth movement's illustrious history had put it in a very influential position. Whoever leads the movement has a lot of clout. The founding leader of the movement in 1949 was his uncle Hussein Onn. Hussein held the position until his appointment as UMNO Secretary-General in 1950. It was originally known as the UMNO Youth Alliance which was formed in Seberang Perai in 1949. Other than Hussein, the other founding members were Ahmad Badawi, father of Abdullah. It started when Hussein was given charge of the party's Youth affairs through the Youth department which was formed soon after UMNO's own founding. Hussein later quit UMNO to join his father Onn Jaafar to set up the Independence Of Malaya Party. Hussein's duties as Youth Head was to instil awareness of the national spirit for independence while also encouraging idealism in the spirit of UMNO among the younger generation.

In his short tenure, Najib's father Razak became Youth chief in August 1950, before elected as UMNO Deputy President in 1951. Under Razak's brief leadership the UMNO Youth Alliance succeeded in changing the party's slogan from "*Hidup Melayu*" to "*Merdeka*". The change was proposed by the late Tan Sri Abdul Samad Idris, the party's Youth head in Kuala Pilah. Razak as the national head seconded the motion and tabled it before the party general assembly on 24th and 25th March of that same year in Kuala Lumpur. Despite opposition, the majority of the delegates agreed to the change of slogan, which reflected the consciousness of the importance of independence from British rule.

When Sardon Jubir was Youth head from 1951 to 1964, the movement stepped up the struggle for independence. At the same time, the movement also became the bulwark defending UMNO from within and outside the domestic political scene. "Youth at the front-line" was chosen as the slogan of the movement. Sardon also changed the movement's name to what it is now, in December 1955. UMNO Youth also played an important part in deciding the date of

independence August 31, 1957. The movement bluntly declared that if the proposed date was not accepted, it would be prepared to seize power. The deputy head at that time Ahmad Badawi was entrusted with the task of forming an armed task force which was dubbed Barisan 33, or Front 33, and drew up clandestine plans to confiscate fire-arms from police stations in the rural areas if necessary. In Singapore, UMNO youth acted brazenly when its members serving in the Royal Artillery threatened a coup should Tunku Abdul Rahman's independence talks in London fail.

But all that was unnecessary as the Tunku came home with the approved independence declaration. UMNO Youth went ahead with gusto in its struggle to build the newly-independent Malayan federation. But it was not a pressure group of watchdog during Sardon's time. The movement formed a para-military force to strengthen the party and defend the leaders. It was time when the nation was threatened by the Communist Party Of Malaya which was determined to set up a proletariat state. After the Emergency ended in 1960, the country was then embroiled in a confrontation with Indonesia, which opposed the formation of the Malaysian Federation. Overall, the Youth movement was more focused on politics to strengthen the party. Para-military training was introduced. Youth members began forming army-style guards of honour at UMNO functions such as celebrations for anniversaries and general assemblies. Under Sardon's leadership, the party defined the qualifications of being a Youth member. A Youth member is one who was aged under 40. Members who were over 40 were disqualified from being the movement's leaders, except for those who became head. During Sardon's time, the movement also marched ahead on the economic front - forming entities such as Tahan Lasak Company which grew during Harun Idris' leadership.

Under Senu Abdul Rahman's stewardship beginning in 1964, UMNO Youth continued to forge ahead on new fronts. As well as being outspoken, Senu pioneered the concept of changing the mindset of the Malays by launching the mental revolution. His ideas to revolutionise Malay thinking were compiled in a book with the cooperation of some Malay intellectuals. The present Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was one of them. Abdullah was the coordinating editor of the Mental Revolution. Under Senu, the Youth movement became patron of the Arts and Sports - two activities which were especially popular

with the young. A choir and Angklung group was formed. Every year the movement organised sporting events. At that time, economic activities figured low in the movement's priorities. It was only during the implementation of the New Economic Policy that business took on more prominence in UMNO Youth - at least as a monitor.

UMNO Youth went through a more radical phase of struggle under Harun Idris, who was then Selangor Menteri Besar. The bloody May 13 riots of 1969 was fresh in everyone's minds. The movement saw itself as the protector of Malay Interests. It monitored the implementation of the New Economic Policy, NEP. It also became a critic of public agencies which were lack-lustre and private companies which did not comply with the NEP, such as the quota of 30 percent for Malay employees at all levels of management. Statutory bodies such as the Employees Provident Fund and the Rubber Research Institute also felt the wrath of UMNO Youth for not having enough Malays in their employment. Even strategic multi-nationals with majority or wholly owned by foreigners saw changes with shares changing hands over to Malays, at the insistence on UMNO Youth under Harun's leadership. Among the most prominent companies to go through that phase was *The Straits Times* which at that time was owned by Singapore shareholders.

The NEP also ushered in a slew of Malay-owned companies initiated by UMNO Youth, such as the Tahan Lasak Company, with the acronym Talasco. UMNO members, including the Youth movement, began trying their hand at business at a time when commerce was in the hands of non-Malays and foreigners. Harun made the movement more efficient at all levels, beginning with the branches right up to divisions and state. Bright young Malay professionals were wooed into joining UMNO Youth. This created a new generation of young Turks who became the core of the Youth wing and earned the respect of others. Harun and his central committee front became the darlings of the party. They were so outspoken as to even criticise the top party leadership of that time. This led to the perception of the movement becoming a pressure group, to the point that some thought Youth members were out of sync with the rest of UMNO. Such moves forced the hand of Tun Dr. Ismail Abdul Rahman, the deputy president, who reminded them not to create a "party within the party".

Under Harun, UMNO Youth eventually clashed with the party leadership. Some described it as the worker revolting against the boss. There were attempts at ousting Harun from his influential post. In 1975, the then Prime Minister Tun Razak appointed Harun as Malaysia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, but he declined because he saw it as a move by people around the PM who wanted to marginalise him from UMNO Youth. When he refused, attempts were made from within UMNO Youth to force him to stand down. In that same year Culture, Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Abdul Samad Idris received backing to challenge Harun for the top Youth post. Harun beat off the challenge in the party elections, but that was not the end of the story. The rift with the leadership grew deeper after Tun Razak passed away in January 1976 and resulted in Harun being fired as Youth head and Selangor Menteri Besar in that same year.

Mindful of the strong pro-Harun sentiments within the Youth wing, Tan Sri Jaafar Albar, the 62-year-old UMNO veteran who also supported him, was appointed the movement's new chief. Jaafar reinvented UMNO Youth's role from a pressure group into a lobbyist bloc. He was also tasked with restoring morale in the movement which had been taken a severe knock following the dismissal of Harun. Jaafar Albar had also gone of record as being a figure who closed ranks with the rest of the party. But six months after taking over the post, he died on January 14, 1977.

The helm then passed on to Suhaimi Kamaruddin - a nephew of Harun - as acting head, who stayed on until being defeated by Anwar Ibrahim in 1982. Najib was elected as vice-head under Suhaimi. UMNO Youth didn't seem to be going anywhere. As soon as he took over Suhaimi declared "an era of action", later changing the role of the wing from being a pressure group to a cheerleader of the government, especially after he and most other Youth ExcOs were granted posts at federal and state levels. He tried to make a come-back in 1984 with the pledge to revive the movement's role as a pressure group, but floundered by an even bigger margin. The failure brought Suhaimi's political career to an end.

Anwar Ibrahim, in turn, remodelled UMNO Youth into a group which he envisioned as the movers and shakers of the party. He brought with him his ideals from outside UMNO, whether as a student or youth leader, into UMNO Youth. These included the eradication of

corruption in the government machinery, and eradicating poverty. He also aspired to uplift the people's morals, and absorb Islamic values in the administration and the people. He was also uncompromising when it came to Malay pride and self-respect. In his first key-note address as Youth head on October 18, 1983, he declared:

“The UMNO Youth’s standards is no longer measured by how outspoken it becomes, but by wisdom and how well it will discharge the duties entrusted to it. The Youth wing does not seek recognition from the party leadership, nor oppose their views. The Youth wing will help uplift the people’s spirits and awareness of nationalism among Malays. That included putting Islam in the forefront as the official religion. It would also realistically help strengthen unity and harmony by guaranteeing the rights and freedom of all. Youth members were also expected to be instilled with the spirit of repentance and awareness.”

In an interview with *Utusan Malaysia* on June 27, 1983, Anwar also explained that UMNO Youth under him would not take a confrontational stance with the leadership. He advocated dialogue with them. He stressed:

“UMNO Youth is the complement of the main party and should not oppose it in questions of struggle and policy.”

However, he did not want it to deviate from the course of reminding party leaders and admonishing them, which he said was placed squarely on the shoulders of the Youth movement.

REVIVING UMNO BARU’S YOUTH MOVEMENT

Najib took over the leadership of UMNO Youth in 1987 when the party had recently experienced its most serious internal crisis since its founding, when a power struggle between two factions broke out

between Dr. Mahathir and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. Dr. Mahathir and his loyal supporters eventually triumphed, but the outcome was a deep split in the party. Eleven party members challenged the results of the 1987 party elections in court. They sought to have Dr. Mahathir's victory declared null and void due to alleged irregularities, and wanted fresh polling. They claimed that there were delegates from branches that were not registered with the registrar of societies, thus making the election illegal. The Kuala Lumpur High Court rejected the petition from the group of eleven, but declared UMNO itself had become an illegal body because of the unregistered branches. When UMNO was de-registered, the party could not exist legally. What the leaders of the de-registered party did was to revive UMNO by a slight change to its name, thus it was registered as UMNO (Baru). The term "Baru" or new was dropped after all the legal problems had been ironed out. UMNO (Baru) became the legitimate successor.

In UMNO (Baru), Najib was appointed as its first Youth chief, and he was also its first member. It took effect on May 21, 1988 for a term of three years. His first task was to revive the Youth wing at all levels; at national, state, divisional and branch -by forming leadership sponsors, followed by the registration of members. He didn't take long to do all this.

On May 21, 1988, he was appointed Youth leader by party president Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. Barely three weeks later, he unveiled the new list of leaders at national and state levels. The divisional and branch level UMNO Youth was completed soon after.

Najib did not make any major changes in the roster of leaders. Most of them were former excos of the de-registered UMNO Youth of February 4, 1988. Only those who were above 40 were excluded, in line with the long-standing policy, such as Datuk Zainal Dhalan, and members who had split from the party like Haji Ibrahim Ali, Fahmi Ibrahim and Tajuddin Abdul Rahman. There were also some former excos of UMNO Youth who were not appointed again as they declined, such as Abu Bakar Dewa (Johor).

However, what attracted a lot of attention was Najib's leadership of UMNO Youth. Under the new rules, the posts of Youth and Wanita heads (and their deputies) were no longer elected, but appointed by the president. The same went for the jobs of secretary-general, treasurer

and information chief. However, the appointments applied only at the national level for those two posts. The other national committee posts - 12 in all - had to be elected every year, unlike the biennial polls of the old party. Various berths at divisional and branch levels were also up for grabs, every three years for divisions and every two years for branches. Dr. Mahathir explained that the move would curb politicking within UMNO as previous contests had become acrimonious.

At the beginning, when questions arose about posts in UMNO Youth, there was talk of changing its status to bureau (such as economic, political and so on) within the party. According to the plan, all the posts in the movement, from top to bottom, would be filled with appointees. At the national level, the powers of appointment would be endowed on the president. At the divisional and branch levels, it would be up to the respective heads. The proposal didn't go down well with many Youth members. They felt that if all office-bearers were appointed, people with potential talent might be by-passed in favour of close rapport with certain leaders. They complained that there would be little opportunity for honing leadership skills if there were no elections. Najib raised the matter with the UMNO supreme council and it was resolved by deciding that only the head and vice-head were to be appointed. All other positions would be open to elections as before.

The question was, as a leader appointed by the president, would Najib be up to the task? As he was indebted to the president (who also brought him into the cabinet), wouldn't he just be a spokesman of the person who gave him the job?

This arose because in UMNO's, the Youth wing was well-known for being outspoken and audacious. Although it is a wing of the party to strengthen UMNO, it also had some autonomy. During the time of Sardon and Senu Abdul Rahman as leaders in the 1960s, it functioned as a bastion to defend the party from external assaults. With Harun in the 1970s UMNO Youth played the part of a pressure group to the point that the top leadership felt threatened. Circumstances dictated that an UMNO leader the late Tun Dr. Ismail admonished the movement for being a party within a party. During Syed Jaafar Albar's term it still had the characteristics of a pressure group. When Suhaimi Kamaruddin and Anwar Ibrahim came along, it veered towards a more positive role, complementing the party leadership. Anwar did not seek

attention from the higher-up's, but stood fast in endorsing policies of the highest echelons of power.

So, what was Najib's stand when he took over as UMNO Youth head? In an interview, he accepted the reality that the wing was formed to strengthen the party. He said it was what UMNO Youth had always stood for since its founding. Najib concluded that it should not be a party within a party. He said it must not go against the grain of the party leadership. And yet, he stressed that the party should be allowed to criticise or give opinions.

Nevertheless, he insisted that there were certain ways to criticise, so that the views would get a suitable response. He was also asked whether being an appointee made him less capable than an elected leader.

On that note, he responded that there was no difference between an appointed and an elected leader. He said so because of the strong approval from the Youth wing and the fact that he previously had emerged to be vice-head uncontested. He felt that he had won over the members as if he had been elected.

Najib surmised that party president Dr. Mahathir's choice in him not only reflected personal views, but also based on the strong backing from the grassroots of UMNO Youth. He added:

“So based on the awareness that I had the full confidence of the top leadership and those whom I will lead, I feel more at ease and confident in leading UMNO Youth. Of course it will be difficult to take the helm if there are doubts about me. So, I am not worried that I'm an appointed leader.”

To Najib, the question of being an effective leader depends on several factors. The most important is integrity and moral leadership which needs the backing of various quarters, especially from the top and the grassroots. If neither group approves whoever is the leader, he explained, that would render the chief useless in guiding UMNO Youth. As UMNO Youth is subject to the main party, whoever that is picked must get the affirmation from a higher authority. Najib must have felt satisfied as both components of the party had given the needed support in order for him to lead the Youth wing. He said:

“With the support of those whom I lead, we can give guidance to them, that is, the struggles of UMNO Youth. With the blessing of the top leadership, I will make changes that they can accept.”

According to him, this is important as no matter how strong UMNO Youth was, it was still a component of the party and the ultimate power lay with the top leadership. This had always been the structure of UMNO since its inception. He also did not see why his position as a cabinet minister would in any way limit his ability to lead the movement. On the contrary, he explained:

“There is some benefit in being in government because we have the means and we know the policies and all the developments first hand as we are part of the decision-making process. Due to that, I think changes from inside can be more effective than changes that are tried by groups on the outside.”

What then would Najib’s UMNO Youth fight for? He seemed to be realistic and did not promise anything drastic. To him, UMNO Youth would continue with the struggle to fulfill the idealism of the movement which had been built up by past generation of leaders. This included the campaign to wipe out corruption, abuse of power, poverty, irregularities and ignorance and so forth. According to him all these had been the essence of UMNO Youth’s struggle, and he wished to continue them. As such, he exposed abuses occurring in the cooperative KUB. He pledged that in the battle against graft and abuse of power, he would take holistic action, without fear of favour.

Apart from continuing the movement’s struggle based on idealism, Najib also gave priority to strength-building, or what he termed as true strength so that the Malays will be stronger in the coming generations in various fields. He expressed hope that excellence could be achieved in many sectors by using the strength of UMNO Youth. He stressed that real strength was needed so that UMNO Youth continued to be relevant and not just a symbolic body.

It cannot be denied that Najib took over UMNO Youth at a time when there was debate about Malay unity. And what were Najib’s plans for Malay unity? He seemed to have a clear picture as to which

institution could help achieve national Malay unity. The only solution was the assembly of Malays in UMNO Baru. The principle was that Malays had no alternative but to join UMNO Baru, the spiritual successor to the original UMNO. He explained:

“If we want an organisation that is effective and can carry out objectives to help Malays, it can only be done through UMNO Youth and UMNO Baru.”

So, he stressed that Malays should join UMNO Baru and restore pride and integrity to the race. He realised that not all ex-UMNO members wanted to join the new UMNO, but if the majority did so, the first level unity could be achieved. There might be differences in opinion and debate, but Malay strength would not be threatened as the core was not jeopardised.

To Najib, there was no point in Malays dominating the legislative assembly if they are disunited and fragmented into small groups as it would only weaken their bargaining power. To him, the biggest challenge was for UMNO Youth to ensure that Malay dominance was maintained. It was for this reason that he and other UMNO Youth leaders worked hard to do two things. First, to attract more members to UMNO Baru. Secondly, to convince Malays that the party was the true successor to the original UMNO in defending Malay power.

When asked whether UMNO Baru would continue the struggle as if the country was only made up of Malays, Najib explained that the effort all that while had not been extreme as if the party didn't understand that the nation was multi-racial. He said:

“UMNO Youth is only fighting for the rights, integrity and the interests of Malays which had been mutually agreed to. So, we will confront whoever challenges those rights. Our warning is that no one else should meddle in the rights of the Malays. If disturbed, we will oppose. But we will explain later that this doesn't mean we want to seize the rights of other races. No. We are only defending our own rights, integrity and the interests of Malays.”

STRONG FOUNDATIONS, SOPHISTICATED THINKING

During his seven-year leadership of UMNO Youth, Najib had given seven key-note addresses to the UMNO general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur. Those speeches were considered important because Najib, as the movement's chief, outlined his vision for its struggle in particular, and the race, religion and nation in general. Points of the speeches were then debated by the delegates, approved and became policies for the movement to implement. Although the general assembly was held once a year, Najib made a lot of statements and announcements linked to the Youth wing that were seen as a kind state of the union address for the UMNO Youth. There were various national issues which were raised by Najib in his speeches. These included politics, the economy, education, religion, language, international relations and the movement's role. They also touched on specific issues such as the New Economic Policy, Vision 2020, the National Development Policy and others. The main-stream media usually published the full text of his speeches. Personalities would scrutinise the speeches to evaluate his leadership as the movement's head. The speeches were naturally important because as Youth head, Najib was also an UMNO ex-officio vice-president.

Arguably, one of his most compelling speeches was at the general assembly on November 7, 1991. For the first time he spoke about his plan for which would become the theme for UMNO Youth's struggle. While under Razak and Sardon, the theme of the movement's struggle was for independence of Malaya; and under Senu it was changed to the hardiness of Youth, then later under under Harun and Suhaimi it became a pressure group, and under Anwar it was Youth being the movers and shakers, for Najib- it was Youth with strong foundations, forward thinking - that became the rallying call for the struggle. Najib gave his reasons.

"In facing future challenges, we have no choice but to improve our quality in several aspects - our dedication and commitment towards the struggles for the race and religion, also gaining knowledge and empowerment of science and technology.

Whether through individuals or through groups, we have to be prepared to be youths who have strong roots and sophisticated thinking.”

He explained further:

“We must have strong roots, in the sense that we have the Malay spirit and awareness to be tough. At the same time we must have a strong understanding of Islam, piety towards Allah. Islam is a progressive religion language and values knowledge. In other words, in order to have strong roots or foundation, we as Malays must have the two basics, that is tradition and religion.”

Najib went on to speak about why Malays and the roots of the Malays alone would not be enough and why the foundations of UMNO Youth must be advanced.

“What is meant by sophisticated thinking is the ability to think rationally, be open to modern times, the love of knowledge and to grasp science and technology. Such sophisticated thinking is needed in preparing ourselves to face and to build an industrialised nation in Vision 2020. Without a sophisticated mind, that is being ignorant of science and technology, the Malay race will not only fail to build an industrialised nation, but also will not reap the benefits of the industrial development. And we are not about to remain as spectators while others play their role and enjoy the fruits of progress and prosperity. “

In the “strong foundations speech” Najib, urged Youth members-whom he said will inherit the struggles of the Malays in 2020 and beyond - to play a more pro-active role in politics, the economy, social and cultural values and the conduct of the race. He stressed that the challenges of the contemporary UMNO was not the same as they were 20 years, or even ten years earlier. He said:

The direction and method of the struggles must be adapted to Vision 2020. UMNO Youth must act as a modernising force to spark a

mental revolution and transform society and the psychology of the race. Everything that is outdated and anachoristic must be removed.

To Najib the modernising force has a lot to do with with being broad-minded.

“UMNO Youth must be open, rational, tolerant, innovative, willing to serve and be ethical among themselves and with other Malays.”

On the the role of the movement *vis a vis* the party and government, Najib said UMNO Youth will be a strong supporter of the government and monitor the implementation of all of its policies. He stressed;

“Youth will act as one power to improve weaknesses found in carrying out government policies. So, UMNO Youth will play the part of the sentinel of government policies. If the implementation is found to have deviated from the original objectives, UMNO Youth will give reminders and constructive criticisms. If the implementation is found to be weak, we will give suggestions.”

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ALMOST DETAINED UNDER THE ISA



In his "sweep of nationalistic speech" Najib, urged Youth members, who he said had inherited the struggles of the Malays in 2020 and beyond, to play a more proactive role in politics, the economy, social and cultural issues and the conduct of the race. He stressed that the challenges of the contemporary UMNO was not the same as they were 30 years, or even 50 years earlier, he said.

The approach and method of the struggles must be adapted to Vision 2020. UMNO Youth must act as a modernising force to spark a

ALMOST DETAINED UNDER THE ISA



Most people do not know that because of his outspokenness, the Acting UMNO Youth Chief, Najib was almost arrested and detained under the Internal Security Act, ISA. It occurred at the end of 1987 just several months after UMNO held its elections for the top leadership which resulted in the split. After the elections, UMNO was said to be in the weakest of positions. Certain quarters – including component parties of the Barisan Nasional - took advantage of the situation to test UMNO's ability to be the protector of the Malays as deemed under the social contract in the federal constitution. Provisions that were considered as upholding Malay dominance was questioned. It would be normal for the Opposition to do so, but on this case it was UMNO's "bed-fellow" in the BN since the time of independence- the MCA- which wanted to stir up the hornets' nest.

Najib, who had just recently taken over the reins of UMNO Youth, could not just let that occur. He saw the challenges against Malay dominance and the consensus of independence which gave Malays their privileges in return for citizenship to non-Malays, as unacceptable. He and UMNO Youth stepped forward and defended those characteristics by admonishing the MCA not to play with fire. He stressed that UMNO Youth would defend Malay dominance until the last drop of blood was shed. UMNO Youth, he said would rather go down fighting than see the social contract violated. Those who challenged the the Malay interests were also reminded that if they

really wanted to take up the matter, they would have to do so over UMNO Youth's "dead body".

Najib and some UMNO Youth leaders made the spirited response when they held a mammoth rally at the TPCA field in Kampung Baru Kuala Lumpur - in heavy rain - where the 1969 May 13 riots started. More than 20,000 supporters at the gathering organised by UMNO Youth condemned the elements-including the MCA - which had doubted Malay dominance. Najib told reporters that as the rally could be seen as provocative, he and some others who spoke might be detained under the ISA. Using the excuse of fighting for Chinese rights, the new MCA President Datuk Seri Dr. Ling Liong Sik (now Tun) and his deputy Datuk Lee Kim Sai (now Tan Sri) openly questioned Malay dominance. This was not new, as the MCA had made similar rantings after the 1986 general elections, saying the Chinese had suffered losses because of the New Economic Policy. In his inaugural address to the MCA in September 1986, Ling stressed that the party would not allow the rights of the Chinese to be eroded.

Not long afterwards the MCA showed that its claims were no idle boasts. In November 1986, the Selangor MCA convention approved a resolution which defied the special position of the Malays as the native people of the land. It also declared that the migrant Ethnic Chinese and Indians which had settled in Malaysia could not be considered as illegal immigrants, and that they had the same rights as the others. In that respect, the MCA gained a written pledge of them as nationals who cannot be deemed as migrants, such as illegal immigrants.

Among some Malays, there was still the tendency to see the ethnic Chinese as being foreigners, as shown in the reaction to a speech by Kok Lanas MP, Datuk (now Tan Sri) Abdullah Ahmad in Singapore in August 1986, on Malay dominance. The comments drew the ire of the Chinese, including the MCA, which lodged a police report complaining of violation of the Sedition Act. The resolution adopted by Selangor MCA the following month was actually a reaction from Abdullah's speech in Singapore. The belated response from the MCA was due to the party itself experiencing a leadership crisis of its then president Tan Koon Swan, who was involved in a fraud case in Singapore.

Although some thought that the MCA's vociferous statements on Chinese interests will end with the pribumi and non-pribumi issue, it

did not turn out that way. In the run-up to the party's top leadership elections in July 1987, the MCA bared its fangs again. A new issue was raised; the fate of over 558,000 depositors in the cooperative Koperasi Penerima Deposit, KPD, of which the majority were Chinese. The MCA knew that the troubles were due to fraud committed by the cooperative's management, some of whom were MCA personalities. They had abused the trust given to them as directors or managers by skimming off the depositors' funds. The KPD was bereft of funds and some clients went bankrupt. The government could do little as the institution was not a legitimate cooperative, and thus not guaranteed by the authorities. The MCA knew this, but ignored that fact and gave an ultimatum to the government to come to the rescue, failing which the MCA will leave the Barisan Nasional by May 1990.

It worked, partially. Although the government did not promise to reimburse the depositors ringgit-for-ringgit, it finally did so, although not a hundred percent. Several days before the the MCA elections, the Cabinet announced a formula submitted by Bank Negara for all depositors to get back their money in two forms: Half in cash, and half in the form of equity or shares. It was this pledge that got Ling reelected with a huge majority as he would be seen as a saviour of Chinese rights by the voters. Something that would not be ordinarily done by the government was pulled through due to pressure and threats.

The ferocity which the MCA made its move did not seem to end there. On the distribution of the nation's wealth, the MCA openly criticised the NEP being extended after 1990. The rationale: Although the policy was with good intentions, it only benefited the Malays only. Even the late Ghafar Baba's proposal that the wealth be distributed equitably i.e 50-50 between the Malays and non-Malays was flatly rejected by the MCA as unfair.

The MCA apparently refused to accept that the New Economic Policy which had been implemented since 1970, had yet to achieve its goals to eradicate poverty and the restructuring of society. Even the aim of the accumulation of 30% of the nation's wealth in the hands of the bumiputeras was far from reached. However, that did not seem to have been of any concern to the MCA, and it demanded that the NEP be dismantled as if the Chinese themselves did not benefit from the policy.

The audacity which the MCA questioned government policies was not limited to the NEP. After that, it raised the issue of the Chinese language, or the lack of it, during a dinner organised by the Johor state government in mid-1987. The lack of prominence of Mandarin was pushed through as if it was a life-and-death matter for the ethnic Chinese in this country. The ban in the use of Chinese characters on sign-boards was also brought up; as did the wearing of the songkok and head-scarf at the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, UTM convocation which had been implemented several years earlier. But in 1987, the issue, which was not opposed by the non Malays themselves, became a race issue for the MCA despite the fact that the graduates themselves did not complain. Also raised was the wearing of uniforms with the songkok by non-Malay ministers and deputy ministers at official functions, or when being sworn in. Taking of the oath and the doa, or Islamic prayers in schools also came under protest because of the Islamic elements. And yet the MCA, as a component party of the BN, had accepted Islamic characteristics in the government and administration.

However, two other issues got the MCA into notoriety by forcing the liberal government to use the Internal Security Act. They were the change in the use of the medium of instruction in elective courses at Universiti Malaya's Tamil and Chinese Studies departments, to Bahasa Malaysia. The amendment was in line with the National Education Policy to ensure the use of Bahasa Malaysia as the language of instruction. The phasing-in had started since 1969 with all English, Chinese and Tamil language medium secondary schools. The exception were the Chinese and Tamil primary schools. All the public universities under the Education Act 1961 also saw the transition from English to Bahasa Malaysia. Clause 21 (2) of the act empowered the Education Minister to change the vernacular schools to national schools if deemed necessary. The MCA, since the 1986 general election, tried to persuade the government to amend the clause by removing that power from the minister. The party wanted to modify the clause by only allowing the minister to change the medium of instruction with the permission of the parents and teaching staff. The Prime Minister and Education Minister promised to look into the matter. The government's commitment to the vernacular schools had

not changed, as reaffirmed by Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba, in a speech in Melaka in October 1987.

Although the reaction to the elective courses issue of Universiti Malaya which the MCA and the DAP had raised did not incur the wrath of the Malays, the concern of promotion for Mandarin-educated Chinese teachers to principals and senior assistants had almost brought Malaysia to another racial confrontation. Promotions were the norm in which the education ministry vetted all proposals through an independent body since 1987. But the move by the independent commission to promote Chinese-educated teachers with 10 to 15 years of experience in Chinese schools drew protests from the MCA itself. It was perplexing to Malays as the teachers in question were Chinese, and not Malays. But the MCA openly opposed the move beginning September 1987 because it wanted the posts of principals and senior-assistant teachers to be filled by Mandarin-educated candidates only.

A meeting with the education minister failed to convince the MCA to accept the move. The education minister Anwar Ibrahim did not yield to the pressure, saying bluntly that he would not yield to pressure under threats from any quarter. In this matter, Anwar Ibrahim received so much outpouring of strong support from all levels of the Malay community that he was caught between them and the MCA. If he had given in to the Chinese demands, his integrity as an uncompromising minister would be undermined.

What angered the Malays in this promotion case was that the two main Chinese parties in the Barisan Nasional had allied with the opposition DAP to campaign against the move. At an ethnic Chinese gathering organised by the three parties and several non-governmental bodies at a temple in Kuala Lumpur on October 11 1987, they agreed on a resolution to urge Chinese pupils to boycott classes until the issue of promotion for Mandarin-educated teachers is not resolved by October 14. This meant the MCA and Gerakan handed an ultimatum to the government to resolve the matter in their favour within two days.

This would have been impossible for the government as the education minister and the prime minister were abroad at that time. The ultimatum might not necessarily indicate that the MCA and Gerakan no longer wanted to abide by the Barisan Nasional way of

resolving problems internally, but it did show that they were prepared to ally with the DAP which had shocked Malay leaders (see News reports beginning October 13 and the following days). The cabinet in the meeting of October 14 tried to calm things down by appointing a committee of five ministers chaired by the education minister to resolve the dispute. A minister from the MCA, Lee Kim Sai was included, but it was too late to persuade the Chinese pupils not to boycott classes. The boycott continued and it was probably the biggest coup ever by the MCA-Gerakan-DAP. To the Malays, the incident showed that the Chinese-based parties, whether within the government or outside, were only interested in their own agenda, although the two BN component parties did things within the context of the coalition. The Malays were surely hurt by the deed. There were demands that the prime minister sack Lee Kim Sai from the cabinet.

UMNO Youth held a huge rally at the Raja Muda Stadium in Kuala Lumpur in which inflammatory speeches and rhetoric poured forth, criticising the Chinese for challenging Malay dominance. Najib, Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib and several others took the rostrum to blast the Chinese. The 15,000-strong rally decided to urge prime minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, who was then in Vancouver to attend the Commonwealth summit, to dismiss Lee Kim Sai.

The move by UMNO Youth undoubtedly raised the political temperature further. There were rumours going around of race riots. Members of the public began hoarding food and other essentials just in case something untoward might happen. There were even reports which claimed that the Malays were sharpening their long knives in preparation of a face-off.

Things got out of hand, when on the evening of October 18, a serviceman on the run from his army camp in Ipoh, went on a rampage in Kuala Lumpur. He failed in his attempt to torch a petrol kiosk In Jalan Raja Alang, which separates Jalan Chow Kit from Kampung Baru. But the shots fired by Private Adam Ja'afar caused the death of one person and injured three others. Confusion reigned when Pvt. Adam ran to Kampung Baru, which had been wary of such incidents since the 1969 May 13 riots started there. The situation was tense in October 19, but Malaysians were mature enough to believe in the Police statements

which said that Adam's actions had nothing to do with race riots, but were criminal acts nonetheless.

But when Police surrounded the Chow Kit area, some began to panic, although most went to work as usual. Only after Adam was apprehended that afternoon that calm returned. The frustration caused by the MCA and UMNO Youth rallies lingered on. Dr. Mahathir, on his return from Canada, warned everyone, especially politicians, to stop making provocative statements. However, this did not prevent the Sultan of Selangor from revoking the Datukship conferred on Lee Kim Sai on October 23rd, who according to His Highness, had raised offended Malay sensibilities by making the "non-pribumi" claims in 1986 - a clear warning which was ignored by the MCA leader.

Although there were moves to diffuse the tensions, the political situation was still very strained and UMNO was planning another Malay unity rally on November 1st at the Merdeka Stadium. It was claimed that half a million UMNO members and supporters were supposed to attend the gathering in conjunction with the 41st UMNO anniversary. Party President Dr. Mahathir was scheduled to deliver an important message. When the rally was planned, the question of promotion for Chinese teachers had not turned into a racial issue. UNMO Youth also did not plan to hold a gathering. But the issues seemed to have cast a pall over the functions as the gatherings could become a security problem and further increase tensions. On Police advice, Dr. Mahathir, who was also Home Minister, called off the November 1st rally. Simultaneously, he announced the arrests of 55 people, later increasing to 63 and after that, more than a hundred persons under the Internal Security Act. He told a packed session of the Dewan Rakyat on October 28th that that the arrests were made and the political gatherings canceled because the government needed to stave off mass unrest for security reasons.

Although the crack-down was not typical of the liberal Dr. Mahathir, it had to be done because the government had a duty to protect public interests and maintain order. Dr. Mahathir blamed both the opposition and government parties for heightening racial tensions by raising various issues and playing brinkmanship. Among the issues which were mentioned by Dr. Mahathir was the question of allowing lion dances, the Bukit Cina controversy, clothing, the oaths taken by

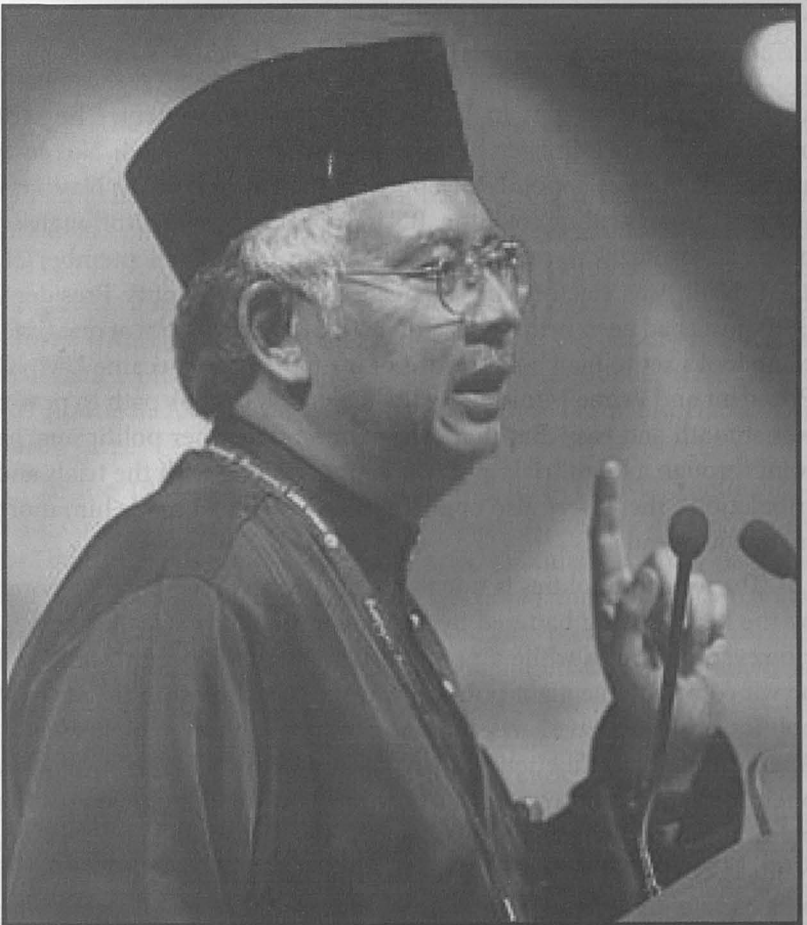
pupils, the university course electives, the primary school curriculum, the pri-bumi debate and the Chinese school teachers topic. According to the prime minister, in speeches made when debating the issues, a lot of harsh words were exchanged openly. He said most of the issues were at the heart of the country's independence and constitution regarding the privileges of the Malays and Islam, and the social contract between the Malays and non-Malays. He was firm in maintaining that such matters should not be raised. He said if one race questioned the rights of another, there would be counter statements and challenges, thus jeopardising the country's stability.

Although MCA and UMNO ministers were the ones who traded insults and raised the political temperature, not one of them was arrested under the ISA. The MCA Deputy President Lee Kim Sai who was very outspoken during the exchanges, was given leave by the party president one day before the crackdown and he departed for Melbourne, Australia that very night and lay low for a while. Najib and other UMNO leaders were also let off. Among the government back-benchers arrested were MCA Youth head Datuk Yap Pian Hon - who was also a Selangor state exco - his deputy and vice-head. From UMNO, three Youth excos - Haji Ibrahim Ali, Fahmi Ibrahim and Tajuddin Abdul Rahman were also nabbed. And from the opposition, Lim Kit Siang and several of his parliamentary colleagues. The net was also cast over non-governmental organisations and pressure groups. Aliran President Dr.Chandra Muzaffar, who suggested that the constitution be reviewed in conjunction with the 30th independence anniversary, was also arrested. The others were social and consumer activists from CAP, Insan, environmental groups and so on. Up to 6th November, Police reported 93 people detained under the ISA.

The decision to detain had undoubtedly eased tensions as far the general public was concerned. The cooperation among the ruling elite was also restored. The Malay dominance which was salvaged by Tun Razak from the ashes of the May 13 in 1969 riots, had been upheld by Dr. Mahathir when he addressed parliamentarians and reminded them of the social contract. Najib as UMNO Acting Youth Head was gratified by Dr. Mahathir's resolute defence of Malay dominance which had been the concensus at that time.

5

NATIONAL POLITICS – TRIALS, TRIBULATIONS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



NATIONAL POLITICS – TRIALS, TRIBULATIONS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



After 30 years in politics, Datuk Seri Mohd. Najib Razak is finally at the number two post in UMNO and the government. The post of Deputy Prime Minister became his on January 7 2004. Not long afterwards, he was appointed Deputy Chairman of Barisan Nasional, BN, the 14-party ruling coalition. BN is a political pact institutionalised by his father Razak to replace the Alliance in 1974. On September 21, 2004, Najib was elected unchallenged as UMNO Deputy President. Both posts had been held by his father, Tun Razak Hussein at one time. Najib looks set to match the record of his father who became UMNO President and Prime Minister. By the looks of it, Najib's path to power was smooth and easy. But there were times, like other politicians, he went through a lot of trials and tribulations. Along with the trials and tribulations, there were also opportunities which had made him more mature as a leader.

The world of politics is not a straight line. It's like having a home by the beach, being battered by the oncoming and retreating waves. However, once in a while a political Tsunami does occur. Many will be wiped out by the giant political waves. As an actor on the stage of politics, one must have a mentor who can sponsor him to higher levels. Apart from that affiliations or linkages must also be right, or else, one's political career - no matter how brilliant - will go nowhere. The political moves also must be prudent. A false move can bring disaster. Najib is obviously someone who is prudent in playing the chess of politics. He persevered, although there were those in his camp who

went nowhere in the political road-map of Malaysia. What were the trials and tribulations that he endured, and how did Najib overcome the challenges and tests?

BETWEEN MAHATHIR AND RAZALEIGH - 1987

When Najib returned to the federal cabinet in 1986, he would not have anticipated the most bitter power struggle in the history of UMNO's leadership when Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad was challenged by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah in the April 1987 party elections. In the elections, UMNO was split between two factions - Team A and Team B. Dr. Mahathir as the incumbent party president led Team A. Tengku Razaleigh, with the intent of usurping power, led Team B. The junior party leaders also took sides. Even in the cabinet, some ministers openly declared their allegiance to either men. Dr. Mahathir had Tun Ghafar Baba as his running mate for the deputy president's post; Datuk Seri Anwar, Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Wan Ahmad and Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid (now Tan Sri) were nominated as the three candidates for the vice-presidents' posts. Tengku Razaleigh allied himself with Datuk Musa Hitam (now Tun) as the deputy president's candidate while the three nominees for vice-presidents were Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Datuk Seri Rais Yatim and Datuk Seri Harun Idris.

In the 1987 election, Najib, who was then UMNO Youth vice-head, contested for a supreme council post. There was no election in the UMNO Youth as polls were conducted biennially at that time (now triennially, along with the main party elections). But as the movement's head Datuk Seri Anwar was going for the vice-presidency in 1987, he vacated the post. Najib as Vice-Head, was automatically promoted as the Acting Head of UMNO Youth one day before the main elections started. As the movement's new acting head, he was automatically the Acting Vice-President of UMNO as defined under the party charter.

Where did Najib stand with respect to Team A and Team B is a matter of conjecture. Najib himself insisted that he had always been with Dr. Mahathir. But Tengku Razaleigh, while campaigning in Kuala Terengganu, claimed that Najib was actually on his side. Tengku

Razaleigh even declared that apart from Najib, four ministers and four deputy ministers were firmly in Team B. They were Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (Defence Minister); Rais Yatim (Foreign Minister); Datuk Shahrir Samad (Social Welfare Minister); Datuk Ajib Ahmad (Minister in the Prime Minister's Department). The deputy ministers in Team B were Radzi Shiekh Ahmad; Rahmah Osman; Kadir Shiekh Fadzir; Zainal Abidin Zain.

Najib remained coy about his stand, despite Tengku Razaleigh claiming the Youth vice-head was supporting Team B. The faction assumed all along he was with them, while the Team A faction under Dr. Mahathir thought Najib was firmly in their camp. At the very least, Team A supporters saw Najib as being neutral, but with the assumption that he backed Dr. Mahathir.

That view was vindicated. Najib had always supported Dr. Mahathir, but did not openly espouse his stand. It was understandable. Najib was caught between between Tengku Razaleigh and Dr. Mahathir who both in their way acted as mentors to Najib in his political career. Tengku Razaleigh was Najib's boss at Petronas. The Kelantanese prince was also close to Razak and was his confidant. Dr. Mahathir similarly also had Tun Razak's trust. Dr. Mahathir was even indebted to Razak for rehabilitating him after being expelled from UMNO in 1969. Razak was vital in Dr. Mahathir's career path which led to the premiership. Dr. Mahathir even said Razak left a will to Tun Hussein Onn for Dr. Mahathir to be promoted to deputy prime minister after which he would become premier when Tun Hussein steps down. Razak had appointed Dr. Mahathir as senator and after the 1974 general elections, Razak brought him into the cabinet as Education Minister. It was clear to Najib that Hussein had been his mentor since 1976, and after the latter retired, Dr. Mahathir as prime minister and UMNO president became Najib's advisor and guide. Dr. Mahathir later made Najib Pahang Menteri Besar; then a minister in the federal cabinet. Surely Najib would support Dr. Mahathir.

This interpretation proved accurate. In the cabinet reshuffle following Dr Mahathir's victory over Tengku Razaleigh in the 1987 UMNO election, those in the cabinet that had cast their lot with Team B were fired. Tengku Razaleigh and Rais Yatim resigned, but Datuk Seri Abdullah, Shahrir and Ajib were dropped from the cabinet. Four other deputy ministers were also dismissed. But Najib remained in

the government as Youth and Sports Minister. Even when UMNO was revived, Najib continued to be held in esteem by Dr. Mahathir as President of the revived UMNO, who appointed him as UMNO Baru's Youth wing acting head. Under the new UMNO constitution, the posts of the movement and Wanita wing at national level were not elected. The posts became ex-officio through appointments by the party president with the supreme council's approval. However, soon after, the provision was abolished, and those aspiring to the Youth and Wanita wings top posts had to be elected every year.

To Najib's supporters, his conduct during the 1987 election was not seen as a weakness. They rejected accusations that Najib was playing off one side to the other and professed to support either Dr. Mahathir or Tengku Razaleigh whenever it suited him. Najib's political secretary when he was Youth And Sports Minister Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, in his book on UMNO Youth, among others wrote:

“In a struggle between two sides Najib did not state his stand directly in the early stages, but did so when it was clear that Dr Mahathir was the more honourable candidate. Najib was not someone who wanted to see speculation about himself. So, Najib neither confirmed nor denied the reports about him. He is seen as a strategic-minded person and mature in politics. Despite the repeated accusations and allegations, Najib continued to be principled. In his history of leadership in politics and government, he never created controversy other than when the Malays were threatened. He is calm and soft-spoken, his ideology rather conservative and his nobility and nature is not domineering; traits that did not make him an aggressive supporter for any group. At the same time, both his allies and foes might think he was rather lukewarm and tepid. On the contrary, these are strengths and wiliness. As a conservative, aristocrat, and an insider to the culture and traditions of UMNO, his personality was shaped by the party. In stark contrast to the other young personalities in UMNO at that time, he got along well with most UMNO veterans.”

Universiti Teknologi MARA academician, Paridah Abdul Samad, in her book *Tun Abdul Razak, A Phenomenon In Malaysian Politics* agrees with Zahid. To Paridah, Najib's stand to cultivate good ties with both sides and not make enemies of anyone is a sign of quality leadership not seen in others. For that reason, he took what seemed to be a neutral stand, according to Paridah, because he didn't want to see the Malays lose two able leaders. But at the same time, she said, as a minister his loyalties should be to the Prime Minister. Unlike his peers in the cabinet from Team B, Najib never questioned joint decisions made collectively. Nor did he leak confidential information from the cabinet which the Team B ministers gleefully did. Observed Paridah:

"For Datuk Seri Najib, the institution of the Prime Minister must be respected by all, if not, it will bring havoc and instability."

In several interviews with the media after being appointed Deputy Prime Minister, Najib replied to charges that he was uncommitted and played safe to see who eventually emerged victorious in the 1987 UMNO party elections. He denied the allegation to a group of *Mingguan Malaysia* journalists, saying it was not accurate.

"I totally reject the charge that I was playing safe. I have my personal stand. My stance is to remain loyal to my head. My boss at that time was Dr. Mahathir, so I remained loyal to him."

In the interviewed published on January 11, 2004, Najib was adamant that he had alternatives.

"At that time, I had two choices. The choice is be loyal to my leader Dr. Mahathir because I was in the cabinet, or I choose to support Tengku Razaleigh, whom I worked under at Petronas at one time. Tengku Razaleigh is also an old family friend. At that time, I was still a political rookie. But I thought long and hard about it and finally decided that staying true to my chief is the most honourable thing to do."

After giving the explanation, Najib came up with a rhetorical question: Is it wrong for me to be labeled a politician who took the safe way out? He said the matter should not arise.

“I should be respected for eventually choosing to be loyal to my chief.”

Not satisfied with the answer, the group of *Mingguan Malaysia* journalists led by Group Chief Editor Datuk Khalid Mohd, probed again about his attitude during the election about not confirming his status on supporting either Team A or Team B. Najib defended his actions:

“Yes, I was thinking at that time which principle was the best course of action. When the time came, when I was needed, I made a decision. And the decision was consistent with what I practiced, that is loyalty to the head.”

Najib proved he had made the right choice in the 1987 elections. His status in UMNO, especially in the Youth wing became stronger. When the post of movement's head was up for grabs in the 1990 party elections, he won uncontested - proving he had the full backing of the movement which he joined in 1976. The victory also showed he got along with the top leadership, Dr. Mahathir. The post was held by Najib until 1993 when he went for one of the Vice-President's seat. In that year's elections there was a vacancy for the vice-president's post when Anwar Ibrahim offered himself for the Deputy Presidency. Najib wasted no time in going for the vice-president's post.

The move is in line with Najib's principle that in politics he would not challenge anyone for a post except when there was a vacancy. The credo enabled him to gain posts without having to contest up to the point. He was unchallenged as UMNO Youth head. He was rising through the ranks- step by step - in the party and government. Unlike Anwar Ibrahim, Najib did not step on anyone's toes to gain posts in the party.

JOINING THE VISION TEAM - 1993

Being in the right place at the right time is another of Najib's secret in his rise through the hierarchy in UMNO. It occurred while he was standing for the vice-presidency in the 1993 party elections, when he was 40. The choice for him at that time was whether to remain as Youth chief - which already carried with it the vice-presidency ex-officio - or go for the elected vice-presidency. Again, he made the right political choice, displaying his maturity. He also knew his strengths in politics. He used his strengths wisely to be a more prominent candidate for a higher post.

In the run-up to the 1993 party elections, Anwar gave broad hints that he was going for the Deputy President's post which was then held by Ghafar Baba since 1987. Using his strong networking in UMNO, Anwar directed his supporters to secure his nomination for the deputy presidency. In public, Anwar promised not to challenge Ghafar. But behind the scenes, Anwar's network pushed aggressively to give him a higher profile as befitting a candidate for the deputy president's post. Anwar was very savvy and slick in his political campaigning. He formed a task force which was dubbed Team Wawasan, or the Vision Team, in order to fulfill his wish to topple Ghafar. So strong was the Vision Team's influence, that Ghafar was brushed aside. Even Dr. Mahathir himself did not resist the onrushing waves of the Vision Team which wanted Anwar elected as Deputy President.

Anwar used his close ties with Dr. Mahathir to give prestige to the Vision Team campaign. With the exception of two cabinet ministers - Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid - UMNO members in cabinet joined the vision team led by Anwar. He not only publicised himself as a deputy presidential candidate; but also submitted three of his supporters for the vice-presidency and Youth head post. Najib was one of the vice-president candidates although it was acknowledged that even without joining the team he could make it on his own merits in UMNO, as he had no problems in winning. This was attributed to the fact that by the time of the polling, most of the UMNO Youth leaders at divisional level, had already become leaders of the divisions themselves. When he expressed the desire to contest the vice-presidency, former Youth leaders who were heading the divisions threw their support behind him.

Two other wawasan team candidates for the vice-presidency were Muhammad Muhd Taib and Muhyiddin Yassin. The three of them won as vice-presidents in the 1993 elections. Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Thamby Cik gained victory as UMNO Youth head. He defeated Tan Sri Isa Abdul Samad, who was then Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar who offered himself as candidate when he could not get into the vision team. Another non-vision team candidate for the UMNO Youth head post was Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, who was persuaded to withdraw a few weeks before the elections. Anwar did not feel necessary to change the Wanita head because Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz pledged loyalty to the vision team. Together, they toppled not only Ghafar, who decided not to defend his post due to insufficient nominations, but also incumbent vice-presidents Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Sanusi Junid.

However, Najib who was forecast to win with the biggest number of votes for vice-president, got second place. Muhyiddin garnered the most number of votes, while Muhammad Muhd. Taib got third place. Najib must have been slightly disappointed by his result, while at least his supporters felt he should have done better. The disappointment was partly erased when in 1996, Najib won with the highest number of votes for the vice-presidency. In that year, Muhyiddin lost his seat. In the 2000 UMNO elections, Najib repeated his victory by winning the most votes as the most popular vice-president. The victory reaffirmed Najib's position as the number three person in the party after the prime minister Dr. Mahathir and deputy prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. The 1996 results also saw two other candidates who were with Najib in the 1993 polling for vic-presidents, Muhammad and Muhyiddin, returned to the same seats, not as challengers to Najib for higher posts in the party.

Najib clearly displayed the knack of knowing when to take the opportunities in politics to strengthen his position. True enough, he did ride on the crest of the Vision Team wave in 1993 for Anwar, but political observers agree that even without the team, he could still make it as he had his own prestige. There were even some observers who thought that Najib's presence in the 1993 vision team made Anwar's camp even stronger in challenging Ghafar. Najib proved that in UMNO, he has many loyal supporters, some of them from the Youth movement who were with him in 1976. Beginning from that year, Najib was seen as a politician to watch. He already offered himself as a candidate for UMNO's highest echelons.

BETWEEN MAHATHIR AND ANWAR - 1998

Following the Asian financial crisis of 1997, it was clear that there were differences in opinion between Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and his beloved deputy Anwar Ibrahim as to how best to deal with the situation. Anwar, who was also finance minister, was more inclined to the methods of the International Monetary Fund, IMF. He left it to the markets to determine the value of the Malaysian Ringgit RM - the consequence was that the currency's value plunged when compared to the US Dollar. Local corporations which dealt with RM were going bust because of the diminishing value of the Malaysian currency. Those who imported goods using the Dollar also sustained enormous debts. The RM, which earlier was valued at RM 2.50 to one US Dollar, was devalued by almost 50 percent to RM 5 at the height of the crisis. Foreign investors were falling over each other to dump local shares at the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange before fleeing. The share index plunged to the lowest level ever seen in the local market. Those who held Malaysian currency rushed to dispose of their RM and converted them to the Dollar, causing the ringgit to slide further. Other than allowing exchange rate to be dictated by the free market, Anwar raised interest rates so high that many local businesses failed. Anwar claimed that the failures in Malaysia's economy occurred because of rampant corruption and nepotism in Dr. Mahathir's administration.

Dr Mahathir, on the other hand, believed that the financial crisis was caused by rogue currency traders out to wreak havoc and destruction on Asian economies. His solution was to implement methods considered as unorthodox by the IMF and the West. He formed the National Economic Action Council, NEAC with him as chairman to find ways of improving the economy. On September 1, 1998, a year after the crisis started, new capital controls were introduced. RM was pegged to the greenback at RM 3.80 per US Dollar. Simultaneously with the drastic measures, Dr. Mahathir sacked Anwar as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, Anwar was also stripped of his post of deputy president in UMNO. However, Dr. Mahathir made it clear that the reasons Anwar was sacked were not because of the differences in opinion on the economy. The reason given was Anwar was alleged to have committed the sexual offence of sodomy with several people. But political pundits said, apart from the moral dimensions, the move

was also politically motivated following the rift between Dr. Mahathir and Anwar.

While dealing with the political crisis that followed, UMNO leaders, including Najib, were again asked to make their stand clear; whether to follow Dr. Mahathir or Anwar. All throughout the crisis, when Anwar's supporters took to the streets and rioted in attempts to oust Dr. Mahathir, Najib as with all the other cabinet members stood by the prime minister. Not one minister, including those who had been close to Anwar, had resigned in protest following Anwar's sacking. They all pledged to remain in the government to deal with the financial and political crisis. In explaining his rationale during an interview with *The Sun* newspaper, Najib said:

“When the dismissal occurred in 1998, we all had to take a stand. I made my commitment, and he (Anwar) made his decision independent of each other. I decided to stick it out with the government.”

In the context of the sacking, Najib's supporters thought Dr. Mahathir should choose him as the best candidate to fill the vacant deputy prime minister's post. As Vice-President of UMNO, Najib won with the most number of votes, and was a front-runner for the second-highest post in the land. It was reported that Najib himself was confident of being given priority, although he knew the prime minister had the prerogative to appoint any of the three vice-presidents of UMNO to be his deputy. Najib hoped that he would be the one. However, Dr. Mahathir surprised many political observers by appointing Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as Deputy Prime Minister to replace Anwar, on January 8, 1999. So, Najib's time had yet to arrive. In the cabinet reshuffle in conjunction with Abdullah's appointment, Najib remained as Defence Minister.

REDEEMING THE NARROW VICTORY AT PEKAN - 1999- 2004

Like other leaders in the Barisan Nasional, Najib went through the November 29, 1999 general election with some cause for concern. Openly, they expressed confidence in being able to return to power

with a two-thirds majority, but accepted whatever the voters decide. The balloting was held against a back-drop of declining influence of UMNO. Dr. Mahathir's leadership was not as popular as before. His decision to sack Anwar from the government and party and later the humiliation suffered by the former deputy prime minister when he was charged with homosexuality, incensed middle-class Malays. The way Anwar was treated in jail and his suffering of a black eye when the then Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Rahim Noor punched him, was seen as the work of a tyrant. Although Rahim's actions were not led directly to Dr. Mahathir and UMNO, it still marked an all-time low for the government in the public's eyes. The Malay voters showed how outraged they were in the 1999 general election. What better way to protest the Barisan Nasional by voting with their feet. And they carried out their threats, influenced by the rhetoric of the opposition. The result? UMNO lost big-time at several parliamentary and state constituencies in 1999. UMNO candidates who did return to power had their majorities substantially reduced. Although the BN overall did return to power with a two-thirds majority in parliament and won 148 seats, the voters gave their thumbs-up to 45 opposition members in the Dewan Rakyat which had 193 seats - 27 PAS, 10 DAP, 5 Keadilan and 3 Parti Bersatu Sabah, PBS.

Najib who defended his Pekan constituency in Pahang, didn't fare any better during the Malay crisis of confidence towards UMNO. He kept his seat with a wafer-thin 241 vote-majority. He personally didn't anticipate such a poor showing but that is the reality of democracy. He accepted the result stoically and expressed gratitude that the majority of voters were still rooting for him. The victory also allowed him to remain in the cabinet which had helped him defend his post of UMNO Vice-President in the 2000 party polling. It was an uphill task to maintain his political success in UMNO. If he didn't win in Pekan and the UMNO election, he wouldn't be able to remain as front-runner of the deputy prime minister's post. Even his position at the divisional level could have been under threat. His political foes would just love to challenge him if he had lost his parliamentary seat. That's politics. If there is a chance to eliminate, the political enemies are ever willing to go for the kill without pity. Fortunately, Najib won, although with a smaller majority. It was enough to redeem whatever defeat experienced.

As a mature politician, Najib did not blame his narrow win in 1999 to the political situation alone. He did some soul-searching and had regrets because there were other factors that made him lose voters. As a Minister and Vice-President, Najib was often busy with his duties in Kuala Lumpur, or even abroad. He was serious about serving Pekan as an MP, but also had to depend on his aides and local politicians to entertain the complaints of his constituents. He, however, made it a point to return to Pekan as often as possible.

In an interview with *The Sun* newspaper, Najib admitted that apart from the changed mood of national politics after the 1999 general election, he had not paid as much attention to Pekan as a member of parliament should.

“At that time, Malay voters were angry with us. My constituency is 92 percent Malay, about the same as a Malay constituency in Kelantan and Terengganu. It’s not just at the east coast, but also the west coast such as Shah Alam and Gombak that reacted the same, where the huge majority we won previously were very much reduced. There is a clear movement against us (UMNO) and Pekan was no exception. I was also very much part of the affairs of the nation as Education Minister at that time. I spent too little time in my constituency because I became complacent that there was no threat. I intend to spend more time managing my ministry - a huge ministry with its challenges. And I will delegate responsibilities to others.”

His return to Pekan became more sporadic and less frequent. Some Pekan-ites commented that Najib no longer returned to Pekan, but was only an occasional visitor. Sometimes he came on a day trip, at other times, stayed only a few hours. Residents were not happy with the situation. But those he relied to aid him in looking after Pekan often painted an over-optimistic picture about the voters’ reactions. After the 1999 elections he realised he could no longer rely on middlemen to meet with the voters. He personally went down to the ground and interacted with his constituents and heard their grouses. He entertained their requests and tried to help out as much as possible, not just during election campaigns, but as often as possible. He no longer took for granted the favourable reports about the support from the grass-roots.

The change in strategy as an MP worked. In the eleventh general election on March 21, 2004, Najib erased the thin majority five years earlier, with a thumping 22,922 vote advantage. It was an increase of almost a hundred-fold from the 214 in 1999. He defeated the PAS candidate, Brig. General (R) Datuk Zakaria Dahlan with 31,956 votes against 9,034. What was more satisfying was that the voter turnout was quite high - almost 78 percent from the 52,687 registered voters in Pekan. Najib also acknowledged that his position as Deputy Prime Minister also helped him in getting a much bigger majority in 2004. Also the political climate under Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was much better in Pekan as it was elsewhere for both the states and parliamentary seats. Najib's challenge for the next general election which must be held before 2009 is to at least maintain the large majority, or even increase it. The opposition and their supporters are still in Pekan, but Najib is not expected to face any formidable challenge. Pekan's voters will naturally want to see their MP remain as deputy prime minister and following that, if Allah wills it, the Prime Minister.



Najib voting in the 2004 General Elections.



Najib with the late Tun Hussein Onn, the nation's third Prime Minister, who was also his uncle.



Najib and Hishmuddin Hussein Onn: they are cousins and both follow their respective fathers' footsteps in politics. Razak was the nation second Prime Minister while Hussein was the third Prime Minister.



Najib (left) with the the fifth Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and the former Prime Minister of 22 years, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.



With Tan Sri Muhammad Muhd Taib, a former Vice President of UMNO, now the party Information Chief and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, an UMNO Vice President.



Najib (third from left) with other UMNO Supreme Council members, giving a standing ovation to Tun Dr. Mahathir, the then president of the party.



Celebrating the victory of BN in the General Elections of 2004.

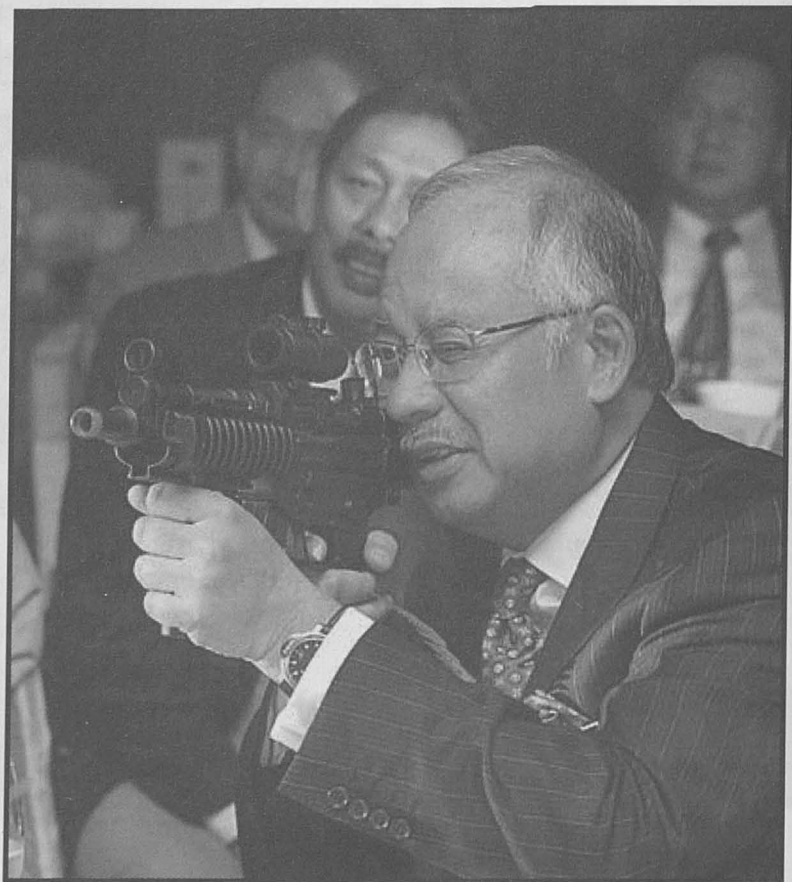


**With former members of Keadilan who crossed over to UMNO,
on the eve of the 2004 General Election.**

Najib's return to federal as Youth and Sports Minister restored his image at the national level as a person determined to be the new generation

6

HEADING THREE MINISTRIES



HEADING THREE MINISTRIES



After one term as Pahang Menteri Besar between 1982 till 1986, Datuk Seri Mohd. Najib Razak returned to the federal cabinet as Culture, Youth and Sports Minister after the 1986 general elections. In the cabinet reshuffle after the 1987 UMNO polls, he was appointed Youth and Sports Minister. The Culture portfolio was transferred to a new ministry created by Dr. Mahathir; Culture, Arts and Tourism , with its first minister Datuk Seri Sabaruddin Chik (now Tan Sri), later Datuk Paduka Kadir Shiekh Fadzir. In March 2004, the Culture, Arts and Tourism Ministry was split into two; Tourism, and Culture, Arts and Heritage. After five years heading the Youth and Sports Ministry, in 1991, Najib was appointed Defence Minister. Following his victory in becoming UMNO vice-president at the 1993 party elections, Najib was promoted to Education Minister, replacing Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim who took over the Deputy Prime Minister's and Finance Ministers' posts. After the 1999 general elections, Najib returned to the Defence Ministry - a post he still holds. This means that 20 years in the cabinet (1986 – till now), Najib had led three ministries - Youth and Sports, Education and Defence.

YOUTH AND SPORTS - 1986 - 1991

Najib's return to federal as Youth and Sports Minister enhanced his image at the national level as a potential to be the next generation

of front-line leaders. He was only 33 at that time. He was also UMNO Youth vice head. He was looked as being sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the younger generation. He began launching activities to suit such needs. During his term in the ministry, Sports got more attention from Najib. Through sports, Najib often appeared with youths and the public in general. He would not hesitate to wear sports gear when taking to the field. Sports was used to promote various games, and at the same time, to realise the youth agenda.

Najib understood that by instinct youths basically want to take part in physical activity such as sports. Najib did not take sports as something to pass the time, but as an activity that could be used to raise national prestige and pride. He was intent on not only upgrading the standards of domestic sports, but also improve the country's image in the international arena. When the nation was given the honour to host the SEA Games during his term as minister, Najib ensured that the event was a success in organisation. In that SEA Games, Najib proved that he had what it takes when Malaysia took in its biggest medal haul ever for any international sporting event it took part. When the SEA Games was held in Jakarta two years after Kuala Lumpur, the country's performance did not decline. Najib made sure that the Malaysian contingent also looked their best when parading at the opening of an international event, by wearing attire reflecting Malaysia's cultural traditions. The national team no longer wore coat and ties as in the past, but in Batik and Malay traditional costume. It was a breath of fresh air for spectators at home and abroad.

To further develop Sports, Najib also pioneered several incentive programmes for athletes, as well as trainers and personnel. He also drafted a national sports policy which aimed at emphasising excellence and performance. He took a holistic approach in developing national sports. He gave priority to athletes and their individual development. He also pioneered a more scientific approach in developing sports and national athletes.

DEFENCE 1991 - 1995

After four years in the Youth and Sports Ministry, Najib moved to Defence in 1990, following in the footsteps of his father as Defence Minister. Some sceptical observers questioned Najib's ability in heading such a demanding ministry and a very senior position, which will not help Najib much in fostering his political grass-roots. Najib was well aware of the critics' views of him being Defence Minister.

"I realise that some people will doubt that I would get anywhere by being in the defence ministry, thinking that it would only involve inspecting guards of honour and saluting."

He proved the sceptic wrong again. He did not stagnate in the defence ministry as some would have it. The defence ministry under Najib was invigorated and its dimensions widened. The traditional image of the defence minister only giving and receiving salutes was no more. Najib introduced many changes and reforms. The concepts of defence, defence policy, regional and global security were introduced. Malaysia's defence forces played an active part in peace-keeping in the world's hot zones under the banner of the United Nations. In the far-flung and remote corners of the globe, Malaysian servicemen brought hope and peace to emerging nations such as Bosnia-Herzegovina.

At the same time, the welfare of Armed Forces personnel were not ignored. Housing for servicemen and their families, which had been a long-standing issue, was given more serious attention. The allowances of soldiers were upgraded. According to the Executive Director of the Malaysian Strategic Research Centre, Razak Abdullah Baginda:

"Najib was the best defence minister who ever served in the ministry at that point. In the first five years at the top of the defence ministry, Najib initiated a process of modernisation of the armed forces, purchasing sophisticated hardware, there were also structural changes to the ministry. The integration of the three branches of the armed forces - Army, Navy and Air Force

- was introduced. The approach in the military became more professional.”

Razak also said the formation of the Rapid Deployment Force, or PAC was also the brain-child of Najib. PAC could be moved at a moment's notice to deal with any threat to the nation. The defence ministry was giving Malaysia a more high-profile stance in global conflict.

EDUCATION - 1995 - 1999

In the cabinet reshuffle of May 1995, Datuk Seri Najib was named Education Minister, succeeding Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. Najib's father Tun Razak had also served in the same capacity once. As Education Minister, Najib did not take long to make changes to improve the system. Just one year into his duties, many changes on policy and other matters were announced. His tasks were immense: The restructuring of the Education Ministry, the corporatisation of the public institutions of higher learning (beginning with Universiti Malaya), the Education Act 1995, Setting up the National Education Council, the National Education Fund, the change in school sessions, a more flexible time-table for schools, emphasis on Science and Maths subjects in schools, monitoring private colleges, raising the standards of teaching certificates to diplomas to enable teachers to have starting pay of RM 900.00 a month, the computerisation of schools and much more. All these changes were made as part of preparations to upgrade education for the 21st century in line with the objectives of Vision 2020 to make Malaysia a modern and developed nation in its own way. As Najib himself admitted:

“My main challenge as Education Minister is to form a new generation for the future in developing their minds, values and morals so that they can adapt to the changing times.”

To realise these objectives, Najib took a comprehensive approach in reforming the education system. Attention was not only given to hardware (students, tools and equipment) but also the software, such as the curriculum which must be relevant to the times. It started with the most basic level; pre-school, primary and secondary schools, right up to the teachers' training college, polytechnics and public and private universities. Everything possible was done to ensure that the education system was up to the task of supplying the needs of manpower and market. For that, education in Science and Technology was emphasised. The education system was also mobilised to create a knowledge-loving society. To encourage bumiputeras to study in private universities, a special fund was created. He gave attention to the long-standing issue of the imbalances between urban and rural schools with regards to facilities and teachers. The aim was to have the same quality of education in the villages as with schools in the towns and cities.

The national higher education council was formed to monitor and step up the development of higher education. The council was also tasked with drafting a long-term plan which will systematically strategies the development of both public and private universities in the nation. The Education Act 1995 and the Private Higher Education Act 1996 were formulated to fulfill the needs of both external and internal. It was acknowledged that the nation needed a higher standard of workforce with expertise in some critical areas, especially in Science and Technology. In that effort, Malaysia was to become an Asian centre for educational excellence, by attracting foreign students to do their first degrees in Malaysia. While receiving valuable foreign exchange in the process, Najib also hoped that Malaysia will also gain knowledge through the increased contacts with the outside.

Although he was not long the Education Ministry, he put his stamp of authority and brought improvements through modernisation. Performance of schools saw marked improvement, while public and private universities became more dynamic and striving for excellence. The corporatisation of the public universities was started while private colleges broke new ground to fulfill national interests. Twinning programmes with various foreign universities were strengthened and widened to include universities in Europe, Asia and Central Asia, in addition to the institutions in the Commonwealth and the USA.

DEFENCE (SECOND TIME) - 1999 TILL NOW

After the November 1999 general elections, Datuk Seri Najib returned to head the Defence portfolio. He is the current minister for the portfolio. The then prime minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad did not state the reasons for the move, but it was obvious a time that Barisan Nasional faced its greatest crisis in confidence at the polls - and within the Armed Forces. The Military made known their displeasure at the ballot box. They were unhappy with the way the national leadership handled political issues linked to the sacking of Anwar Ibrahim from the government and UMNO. It was a universal verdict. Barisan Nasional's popular vote plunged. Najib himself narrowly won at his own constituency, as with many other BN candidates.

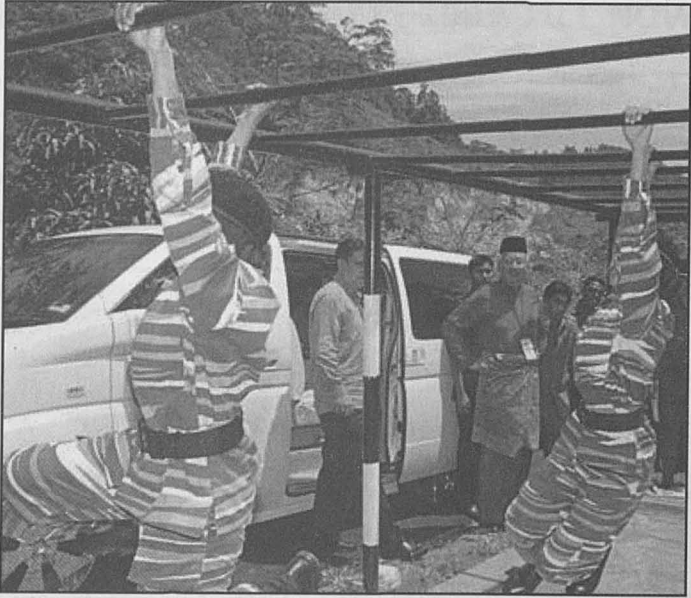
Although secret balloting was practised, the government knew that among the armed forces, which normally staunchly supported it, there was an open bias towards the opposition parties. Some servicemen openly displayed opposition party posters and symbols on their vehicles. The government vowed to rectify the situation. If possible, the government wanted all military personnel to vote for the ruling party. According to some observers, Dr. Mahathir looked to Najib to correct the alignment in the armed forces, seeing that he had been successful at the defence ministry before and was quite popular among the Army.

For Najib, it was an opportunity to continue with the modernisation that he had started in 1991 as preparations for the era of globalisation.

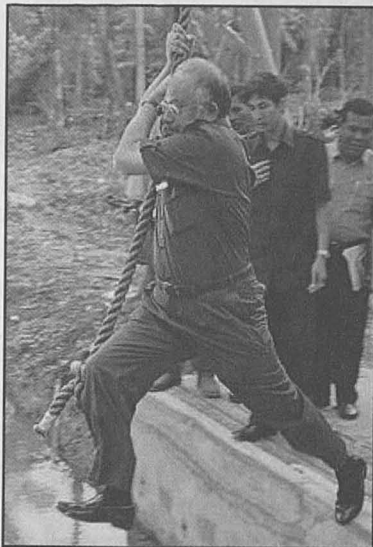
As a minister, whether Youth and Sports, Defence or Education, Najib proved to be up to the task. In the public's eyes, he also had a positive image wherever he was placed. He was young just 33, when he first became Youth and Sports Minister, 38 when he was appointed Defence Minister, 41 as Education Minister, but he showed extraordinary maturity as a leader. He also had good rapport with the prime minister and deputy prime minister. He was well received by civil servants wherever he served as minister. Although he went into politics under the shadow of his father the late Tun Abdul Razak, he emerged as a leader in his own right by as Pahang Menteri Besar. He could already succeed on his own merits.



Inspecting the guards welcoming Najib at the Ministry of Defence on his first day as the Minister of Defence in 1991.



Meeting with the trainees of the National Service Programme.



This is how to do it. Najib trying one of the exercises that the trainees of the National Service Programme have to undergo during their stint with the programme.



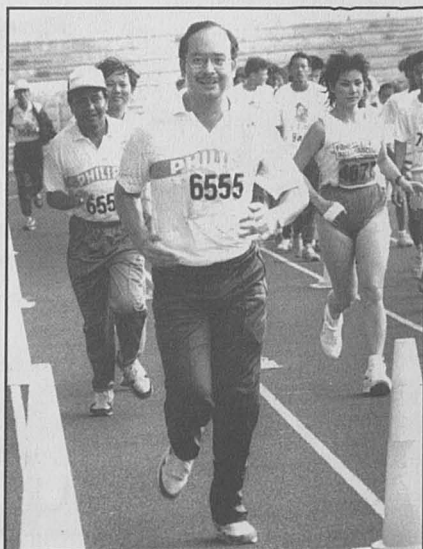
Najib with the National Service Programme trainees at the end of their three month course.



Najib as the Minister of Defence with senior officers of the air force at TUDM Subang.



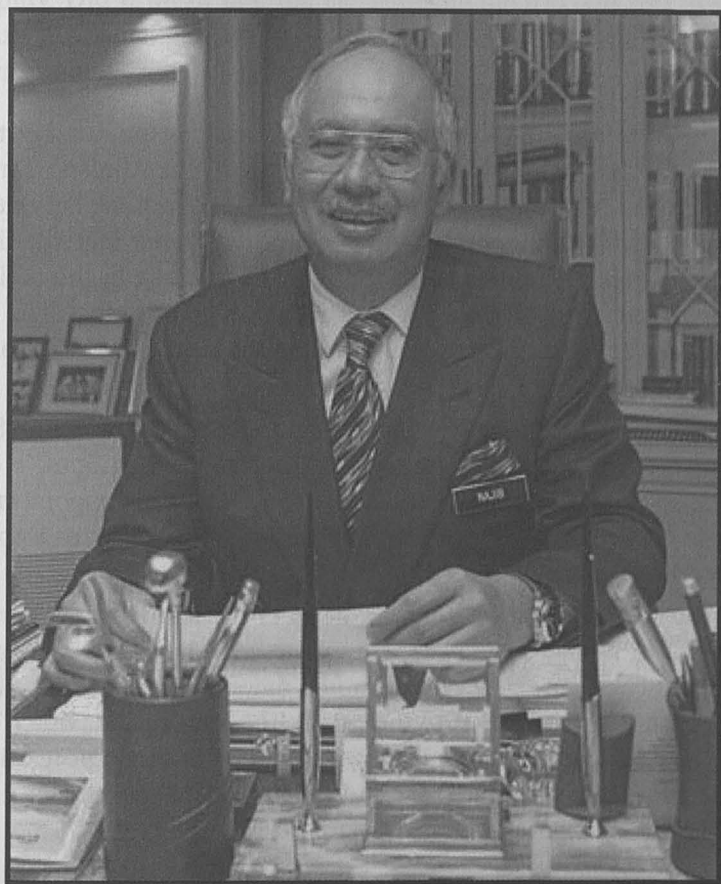
Showing how badminton should be played when he was the Minister of Youth and Sports.



As Minister of Youth and Sports, Najib was known to have taken an active part in sports programmes.

7

BECOMING THE NUMBER TWO MAN



BECOMING THE NUMBER TWO MAN



The appointment of Datuk Seri Najib Razak as the number two man in the federal government was made by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on January 7, 2004. The Yang DiPertuan Agong made the announcement on the same day Datuk Seri Abdullah and Najib were granted an audience with His Majesty. In the cabinet meeting after the audience, Najib was officially introduced to the cabinet as the Deputy Prime Minister. He sat on the right of Datuk Seri Abdullah.

Najib was personally informed of his appointment by Datuk Seri Abdullah at the Prime Minister's office in Putrajaya at 5pm, a day earlier, on January 6, 2004. Other than presenting his appointment letter to his deputy, Abdullah also briefed Najib on his role as Deputy Prime Minister.

After the meeting on Tuesday, news of the appointment spread like wildfire. It's true what people say about good news not being able to be held back. As expected the foreign news agencies were the first to wire the story to the rest of the world. The local media, which did not want to be out-done, or had earlier neglected to carry speculations on the issue, picked up the story and did not hesitate to highlight the news in the front pages.

After becoming Deputy Prime Minister, Najib's position in UMNO and the Barisan Nasional became stronger. The UMNO supreme Council, in a meeting a few days later, entrusted him with the duties of

Deputy President and party management committee chairman. At the BN supreme council meeting, he was appointed Deputy Chairman. His position became complete as the number two man in the party.

WHY AFTER TWO MONTHS

In a press conference announcing Najib's appointment, the Prime Minister was asked why he took more than two months to name his deputy. Did it mean that the eleventh general election was near? As usual, Abdullah gave the stock answers every time a journalist asked him about it:

"I had said I will announce the Deputy Prime Minister after making a decision about the Deputy Prime Minister's post. So I did it today."

Abdullah also said he had other plans for 2004.

"I will be making a series of visits to several ASEAN capitals to call on my my counterparts while working as the chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organisation of Islamic Conference. Apart from that there are also other conferences at the summit level. So, its better that I have a deputy."

At the same media conference he was asked whether he felt relieved that the question of who would be the deputy prime minister had been resolved.

"Just like that."

He was asked what the effect the appointment of Najib had on UMNO and the general election. He said he believed it would be good as Najib was the number one Vice-President in UMNO.

However, some political observers cited other reasons why Abdullah did not name a deputy immediately - in government and party- as soon as he became Prime Minister on October 31, 2003. Some said Abdullah would not name his deputy until he received a sign from Allah through special prayers which he performed every night since becoming prime minister.

Others were of the opinion that the post of deputy prime minister would remain vacant until the eleventh general election was held. The move is to please various quarters and ensure UMNO unity in preparing for the nation-wide polls, which was scheduled at any moment. Datuk Seri Abdullah would only name a deputy, or even make a change to the cabinet, after the general election.

By doing that, no one would feel slighted if not selected. All quarters, especially those who were UMNO vice-presidents, would give the extra mile to help their boss to win a bigger mandate from the people, with the hope that he would be the one.

Those who had this view said Abdullah would be in a much stronger position to make his choice if the ruling party returns to power with a much bigger mandate than that achieved by Tun Dr. Mahathir in November 1999. Abdullah would be free to pick anyone as no one would question his authority if the victory was impressive. The observers pointed out that all three UMNO vice-president pledged to accept the decision Abdullah makes. As Abdullah chose Najib as his number two, that view proved irrelevant.

Another view that was most likely- but not asked by journalists as to the time gap between Abdullah's ascension and the naming of his deputy - had something to do with Abdullah wanting to build an image and settle in as Prime Minister through policy programme announcements, the direction and the directives in the hundred days since coming to power. This was the opinion of the national news agency, Bernama chairman Datuk Anuar Zaini, who is close to Abdullah. As it is commonly known, when Abdullah was deputy prime minister, and even after being named by Dr. Mahathir as his successor on June 22, 2002, Abdullah did not strut around as a leader who had his own agenda and vision. Some went even as far to say that Abdullah was not a visionary. Others expressed doubts that he would be able to lead Malaysia. Some even expressed concern that there would be a gaping hole in leadership when he would become prime minister.

So, as soon as Abdullah did become prime minister, according to Datuk Anuar, he proved the critics wrong. He did this by making public announcements after taking over from Dr. Mahathir, which were well received. His bearing, leadership style and direction, might be different from Dr. Mahathir's previously. But as a leader, no one can deny that Abdullah has his own vision on how to develop the country. This has now been acknowledged. Even the foreign media, such as the Financial Times, London and International Herald Tribune described him as a leader with authority. In building his own style in domestic and international politics, Abdullah would not want to be over-shadowed by anyone, including his own deputy. That was why he bided his time in naming a deputy prime minister, so that he could elaborate his agenda first. After making sure of what he wanted to do for the nation, then only did he fill the vacancy of deputy prime minister, which he did 69 days after being sworn in as prime minister. With that, the question of who would be deputy prime minister no longer arose.

APPOINTING THE DPM - SELECTION PROCESS

Contrary to popular belief, the Deputy Prime Minister's post is not enshrined in the federal constitution. In the nation's laws, there is no requirement for a post of deputy prime minister. The post is a tradition, created by the first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman for administrative purposes to aid him in carrying out his duties. The position became the number two person in the hierarchy of government after the prime minister. In view of that, if Abdullah did not want to follow the practice, he could have very well done so and remain faithful to the federal constitution. However, he did not want to do such a thing, because of the burden of office is too great for any one person to bear without a deputy.

Besides, in the context of Malaysian politics, having a deputy prime minister is already the norm despite not being in the charter, as it helps to determine the line of succession. The understanding is that the deputy prime minister takes over when the prime minister steps down. The practice is different in the United Kingdom, where the deputy prime minister is just the number two to the prime minister.

For, example, Britain's PM Tony Blair's deputy was John Prescott. If Blair steps down before his term is completed, Prescott automatically cannot succeed him. As a deputy prime minister, there is no way he can become prime minister. What the British do is that when there is a vacancy for the top government post, the party with the majority in parliament - in this case the Labour party - will elect a new leader, who will then become the new prime minister.

But the political culture is different in Malaysia. The deputy prime minister is publicly accepted as the successor to the prime minister. For that reason, anyone who is very ambitious in politics would not hide the desire to be the deputy prime minister. He or she knows that once in that position, the post waiting - if not sacked or side-lined by the current Prime Minister-would be the number one. In Malaysian politics context, where the BN is in power, only those who are three vice-presidents of UMNO would be seen as having a shot at being UMNO deputy president.

All eight deputy prime ministers had gone through the process. Razak, the first deputy prime minister was appointed to the post because he had been UMNO deputy president. If there was a vacancy in the deputy president's slot, it would be filled by one of the UMNO vice-presidents. This occurred in 1973, when the then deputy prime minister Tun Dr. Ismail Abdul Rahman, who was also UMNO deputy president, passed away. Razak the prime minister, appointed one of the UMNO veeps Tun Hussein Onn as deputy prime minister, and following that was confirmed as UMNO deputy president. Three years later the process was repeated. Tun Abdul Razak died on January 14, 1976, and Hussein succeeded him as prime minister. Hussein then named one of the three UMNO vice-presidents as deputy prime minister, and following that, as party deputy president. And so did Datuk Seri Abdullah pass through the same path. Abdullah was appointed as deputy prime minister because he was one of the UMNO vice-presidents.

What is interesting is that the vice-president appointed as deputy prime minister may not necessarily be the one who got the most votes of the three during the party elections. Even Hussein, Dr. Mahathir, Ghafar Baba and Abdullah were not the leading vice-presidents when they were appointed deputy prime ministers.

Only three politicians who became deputy president of UMNO later were named as deputy prime minister. They are Razak, Tan Sri Musa Hitam and Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. Musa was appointed as deputy prime minister in 1981 after defeating Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah for the deputy presidency of UMNO. Anwar became the number two in government after his victory over the incumbent deputy president Ghafar Baba in 1993.

TO CONTINUE THE TRADITION OR NOT

In theory, Abdullah could choose anyone he wanted for the position of deputy premier. As mentioned, the deputy prime minister's post is not provided in the federal constitution. The deputy prime minister is only a post created by the cabinet to signify who the number two is in the country. That's why the appointment doesn't have the trappings of ceremony, but only a separate swearing-in for the cabinet. The Yang DiPertuan Agong is just informed of the appointment, as what was done for Najib on January 7, 2004. Najib was escorted by Abdullah for an audience with the monarch and introduced as his number two. No swearing-in before the King, and no pledge about state secrets. A swearing-in is carried out if the person is not yet in the cabinet, which was done for the late Ghafar Baba in 1986. Even that oath-taking is not for the post of deputy prime minister, but as a member of the cabinet. Based on this rationale, a minister need not be sworn-in again if he or she transfers to another portfolio.

As the post of deputy prime minister is not mandatory under the constitution, it would be perfectly legal if Abdullah did not fill the vacancy. Some observers would even say the prime minister would just leave the post vacant as it is not a necessary under the constitution. But Abdullah rejected the notion. He had repeatedly been asked by journalists before the appointment when he would name one. His only reply:

"Give me time, and when the time comes to fill the post, I will let all of you know."

In other words, he didn't want to be pressured by anyone, including former prime minister Dr. Mahathir, to make an appointment.

Even Dr. Mahathir, who appeared to have tried to lobby Abdullah to appoint Najib as number two not long after expressing the desire to quit on June 22, 2002, finally relented that it was the sole prerogative of Abdullah as prime minister. Earlier, Dr. Mahathir, when queried by journalists as who was his preference, mentioned Najib several times. But when Abdullah said he would name a deputy only after he becomes prime minister, Dr. Mahathir changed his stance, and did not mention anyone's name. He left it to Abdullah to decide on who would be the deputy.

It was clear that as Prime Minister, Abdullah had the freedom to choose whoever he wished and make the appointment when the time was right. In theory, appointing a deputy prime minister can be done through tradition. But if he had extraordinary political powers, he might have broken away from the norms and UMNO traditions.

It is tradition based on the practices of the past that made a sitting prime minister appoint a deputy in case of a vacancy. Past prime ministers all appointed people who were UMNO vice-presidents. Under the UMNO constitution there are three vice-presidents who are elected simultaneously by delegates at the UMNO general assembly. There are three other vice-presidents who are appointed by virtue of them being heads of the party's wings, i.e the Wanita, Youth and Puteri. But normally, the choice for promotion is only made from the three elected executives. In the current context they were Najib, Tan Sri Muhammad Muhd. Taib and Muhyiddin Yassin. However, the choice narrowed to two; Najib and Muhyiddin. Muhammad, the former Selangor Menteri Besar, was not in the running because he was not a member of parliament. The deputy prime minister's post is reserved for MPs in the Dewan Rakyat.

Early on there was speculation whether Abdullah would abide by or break tradition in choosing a deputy prime minister. Some wanted him to choose someone from outside the three vice-presidents, since they had publicly promised to agree to any choice of the prime minister. It was this line of thinking that sparked rumours that minister in the prime minister's department Datuk Seri Utama Rais Yatim might be the new deputy prime minister. Only Abdullah knows whether that was the case.

He might have thought about taking from outside the traditional circle of politicians, but then was aware of the political implications. The experience of former prime minister Hussein Onn was probably a lesson for those wishing to pursue an independent course. When Hussein became prime minister in early 1976, he considered selecting one of his favourites in the cabinet Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie (now Tun), who was then Home Minister under Razak. This would mean sidelining the three vice-presidents, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, Ghafar Baba and Dr. Mahathir. But such talk met with vehement opposition from the three veeps. They met Hussein and gave an ultimatum to appoint one of the three, failing which they would not join Hussein's cabinet.

Hussein, who probably thought he was not politically strong enough, eventually appointed Dr. Mahathir. Tengku Razaleigh became Finance Minister, while Ghafar Baba declined the offer to become Agriculture Minister on grounds that he saw himself as the most senior among the three, and thus should be the deputy prime minister. When it was Abdullah's turn to make the call, he probably wanted to avoid a political backlash, especially at a time when he was building UMNO's strength for the general election before the end of 2004. So, he upheld the UMNO tradition and selected one of the vice-presidents - a decision which was seen as solidifying his position in UMNO.

WHY NAJIB AND NOT MUHYIDDIN OR...

Even if it was UMNO tradition, why choose Najib and not Muhyiddin? It might be just an academic exercise to ask this, since it's all in the past now. But at one time, to some political observers, Abdullah was inclined to choose Muhyiddin as deputy prime minister. Again, whether its true or not, only Abdullah knows.

Such talk surfaced because after becoming prime minister, Abdullah remained coy about his choice of his deputy. Some even asked that if the choice right from the start was Najib, why didn't Abdullah appoint him right away. Why wait? So, the conclusion drawn was that Abdullah had someone else in mind other than Najib to become deputy prime minister.

There was further speculation that Abdullah could not get along with Najib, who was said to have great influence in UMNO. Considering that Najib won the vice-presidency twice in a row - in 1996 and 2000 - showed his supremacy in UMNO. The reality that Abdullah himself was second best in the vice-presidency race of 1996, showed Najib's influence and could challenge Abdullah's leadership. The political hacks spread stories that if there was a personality that could challenge Abdullah's position as prime minister and UMNO acting president, he would be Najib. And if Najib was appointed deputy prime minister, he would use his position to topple Datuk Seri Abdullah in the near future. In such a situation, Abdullah would not have chosen Najib as his deputy.

The termination of service of NSTP Group Chief Editor Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad, who was widely known to have lobbied hard for Najib to be deputy prime minister, seemed to have vindicated the assumptions that Abdullah's first choice was not Najib. Abdullah, who was once political secretary to Tun Razak when he was prime minister, openly campaigned for Najib through the newspapers he was in charge of ; *The News Straits Times*, *The New Sunday Times*, *Berita Harian* and *Berita Minggu*. Even when he was giving talks, he hinted that if the prime minister did not appoint Najib as deputy prime minister; the BN will lose in Pahang, difficult to get two-thirds majority in Kedah, and no hope whatsoever of re-capturing Kelantan and Terengganu from PAS. But as the prime minister himself pointed out, Abdullah Ahmad's termination had nothing to do with UMNO's internal politics or who he supported to become deputy prime minister. On the contrary, he was dismissed because he wrote an editorial in the *New Straits Times* about the Saudi royal family that prompted protests from Saudi Arabia, which was potentially damaging to Kuala Lumpur-Riyadh ties if no action was taken.

To some, the explanation was not convincing. Abdullah Ahmad's sacking, according to them, surely had something to do with him strongly lobbying for Najib as deputy prime minister. Furthermore, they saw the replacing of Abdullah by Datuk Kalimullah Hassan, the former Bernama chairman, as another move by the prime minister to tighten his grip on the media under UMNO control.

If that wasn't enough, another story made the rounds about Najib's wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor not getting along with Datuk

Seri Abdullah's wife Datin Seri Endon Mahmood. It was rumoured that they were not on speaking terms. The cynics claimed Endon would influence her husband to brush aside Najib - which was later proven untrue. Endon and Rosmah on separate occasions, described as slanderous talk that they were not speaking to each other. Endon, in an interview with *the Star* newspaper in conjunction with her husband's 100 days in office, stated that she did not meddle in the prime minister's choice of a deputy prime minister. According to Endon, the appointment of a deputy was done by Abdullah based on considerations of progress for the race, religion and the country.

As the leading vice-president of UMNO, Najib undoubtedly had two qualities which Abdullah emphasised were important to aiding the prime minister and able to lead well while Abdullah handled international relations. The question raised was that as Najib is an ambitious politician who has substantial clout in UMNO, will he remain loyal to Abdullah? And for how long? Or will he do a Musa Hitam or Anwar, who directly or indirectly used their positions as deputy prime minister given by their boss, to threaten the prime minister himself?

NAJIB'S REACTION

Although still on 50 when he was appointed Deputy Prime Minister, Najib is rich in political experience in UMNO. For 28 years as a politician, he has witnessed many incidents which matured him as a politician. He started his political career in 1976, almost by accident, with the death of his father Tun Abdul Razak, who was also the second prime minister. Giving in to calls from his father's supporters to stand for the Pekan parliamentary seat in Pahang, he sacrificed a good job as a Public Affairs Manager in Petronas to take the plunge in a by-election, winning uncontested and making him an MP at 22.

He has not looked back ever since. As a rookie MP, he was appointed Energy, Telecommunications and Post Deputy Minister. Later he was made Deputy Finance Minister. In the 1978 general election, he contested at state level and was appointed Menteri Besar. After one term in Pahang, he returned to parliament in 1986 and

was named Youth and Sports Minister. Later, he moved to become Education Minister before becoming Defence Minister.

In politics, like Abdullah, he rose through the ranks, step by step. He started out in politics at the national level as UMNO Youth Exco, later rising to Youth vice-head, followed by UMNO Youth Chief. In 1993 he was elected UMNO Vice-President - a position he successfully defended in 1996 and 2000. In the 1993 elections he got the second-highest number of votes for the vice-presidency. In the 1996 and 2000 elections, he was the top vice-president. The position confirmed him as the third-most popular figure in the party after the president and deputy-president. The reality was that he was tested three times in contests.

Following that, when there was a vacancy in the Deputy President's post following Anwar Ibrahim's sacking in September 2, 1998, Najib's supporters felt that he was the best man to fill the post. After returning to power as UMNO's most popular Vice-President twice in a row, they thought he deserved to be Deputy Prime Minister. However, due to reasons not stated, Dr. Mahathir named Datuk Seri Abdullah as Deputy Prime Minister. Although he welcomed this decision, his supporters could not hide their disappointment.

That was why when Dr. Mahathir announced he wanted to retire on June 22, 2002 and named Abdullah as his successor, Najib's supporters said Abdullah had no choice but to appoint Najib as his Deputy Prime Minister. Some of them were elated when Tun Dr. Mahathir himself expressed his view that after Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi becomes prime minister, Najib should be appointed as deputy prime minister. Dr. Mahathir repeated the call. But when Abdullah made it a point that he wouldn't be naming a deputy until he became prime minister, Dr. Mahathir eventually accepted the fact that the prerogative to appoint a deputy lies solely with the prime minister of the day.

Najib's backers were clearly dismayed with Abdullah's reluctance to accept Dr. Mahathir's suggestion to name Najib as deputy prime minister. Najib, however, took the uncertainty with calm. Like Dr. Mahathir, he made a statement saying it was entirely up to Abdullah. In the 2003 UMNO elections, Najib, Muhyiddin and Muhammad diffused the situation of the deputy prime minister's post becoming an issue, by declaring that they would accept any choice of Abdullah.

Still, Najib's supporters did not hide their feeling that if their boss was the number one vice-president, then Abdullah should favour Najib. Even Najib stated that he had heard talk that he himself was Datuk Seri Abdullah's first choice.

The hearsay proved accurate. When he was appointed deputy prime minister, the announcement came as no surprise. The appointment was anticipated. The big shock would only happen if Najib did not become deputy prime minister.

Najib conveyed the good news to his mother Tun Rahah and his wife Datin Seri Rosmah after receiving the letters of appointment on January 6, 2004, as well as his family and relatives. However, they were asked to keep mum until the official announcement the next day, after Abdullah had formally informed the King and the Cabinet of the appointment on the morning of January 7th. Journalists who somehow got wind of the event tried to contact the Prime Minister's office for confirmation, but none was forthcoming yet. However, news of the appointment was quickly picked up by the foreign wires services such as *Reuters* and made public, quoting unnamed sources. Ironically, the local newspapers used news from the foreign wires for their respective headline stories about Najib's selection.

After 28 years in UMNO, working his way up to become vice-president, Najib could not hide his joy when he was promoted to Deputy Prime Minister. Apart from thanking Abdullah for his trust in becoming Deputy Prime Minister, Najib expressed gratitude to God for the fate in following in the foot-steps of his father. Accepting the appointment with humility, Najib held a gathering for *tahlil*, or special prayers of thanksgiving which was attended by some 500 of his supporters.

Still, as someone who has broad experience in politics at the highest level, Najib reminded himself and his supporters that it was a huge responsibility to aid the Prime Minister to implement his agenda and vision. Unlike Musa Hitam who thought himself as being on par with the Prime Minister when appointed Deputy Prime Minister to the point that he reveled in the monicker of the 2M administration (Mahathir-Musa), Najib seemed to take a different view.

In his first press conference as Deputy Prime Minister on January 7, 2004, Najib said:

"I strive to be a deputy to help Abdullah to the best of my ability, to implement all the government agenda and policies as determined by the Prime Minister. This includes forming a government which is more efficient, to combat corruption and set up a more efficient delivery system. I want to stress here that I will aid the Prime Minister in administering the nation so that his wishes of bringing glory, excellence and distinction, will - God willing - become a reality."

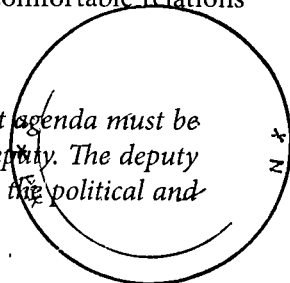
To carry out the tasks, Najib pledged allegiance to Abdullah, because, according to him loyalty is the most important element in a deputy towards the Prime Minister, other than working hard with full dedication. He realised the challenges ahead would not be easily overcome, but he believed that it could be achieved with prayers and cooperation from all quarters.

The question of his loyalty to the head became the Najib's theme several days after his appointment. In an interview with *Berita Harian* on January 10, 2004, he outlined three factors in proving his fidelity towards Abdullah:

"First of all, I always remember that I am the number two and must be loyal to the chief. Secondly, I always remind my supporters not to have a major agenda. Thirdly, I advise those who want to cause a rift between Abdullah and myself to just forget it, because they will fail."

In an interview with *Mingguan Malaysia* published on January 11, 2004, he was again asked about loyalty to the head. Despite attempts to corner him by asking repeatedly about loyalty, Najib did not budge from his position of that being true to the man who appointed him as Deputy Prime Minister. He also strove to have comfortable relations with the Prime Minister.

"I accept the fact the political and government agenda must be decided by the Prime Minister, and not his deputy. The deputy is responsible for aiding and ensuring that all the political and



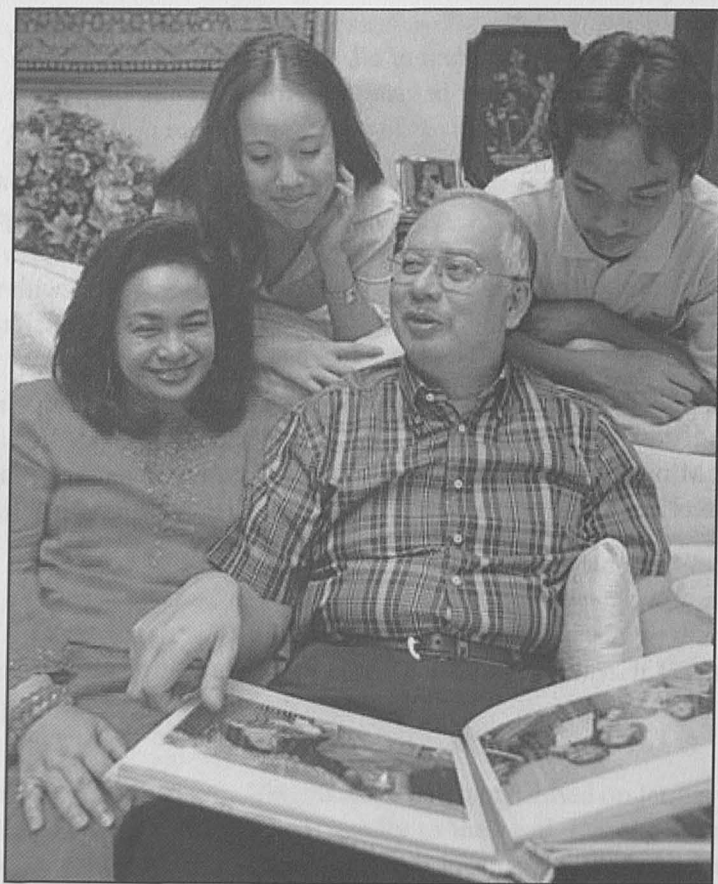
government agenda is carried out effectively so that the objectives are achieved.”

In the interview Najib was also asked how he valued the appointment as Deputy Prime Minister. He replied:

“I am deeply touched. First of all, it is , of course a recognition from the Prime Minister in being given the trust and confidence for me be given the position. To me, it is a decision that has a lot of meaning because of the appraisal from the Prime Minister is an honour.”

To him, the position of Deputy Prime Minister, “comes with the feeling of heavy responsibility. That is why I always remind myself that while I feel a sense of satisfaction, I also feel much humbled by it.”

As someone who realises the heavy burden ahead of him, Najib concluded, “the responsibilities I carry out will be evaluated by the Prime Minister and the people and by Allah in the hereafter. That is why I feel it is a position which brings a lot of heavy responsibilities.”



Najib, Rosmah and their children on the day Najib was appointed as the Deputy Prime Minister.



Najib with Rosmah and Tun Razah on the day he was named as the Deputy Premier.



A loyal deputy – Najib with his boss, Abdullah.



Najib at the opening of UMNO Youth, Wanita and Puteri joint general assembly at the the party headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.



Tun Rahah – happy with Najib's performance in politics.



Rosmah – a motivating force behind Najib's success.



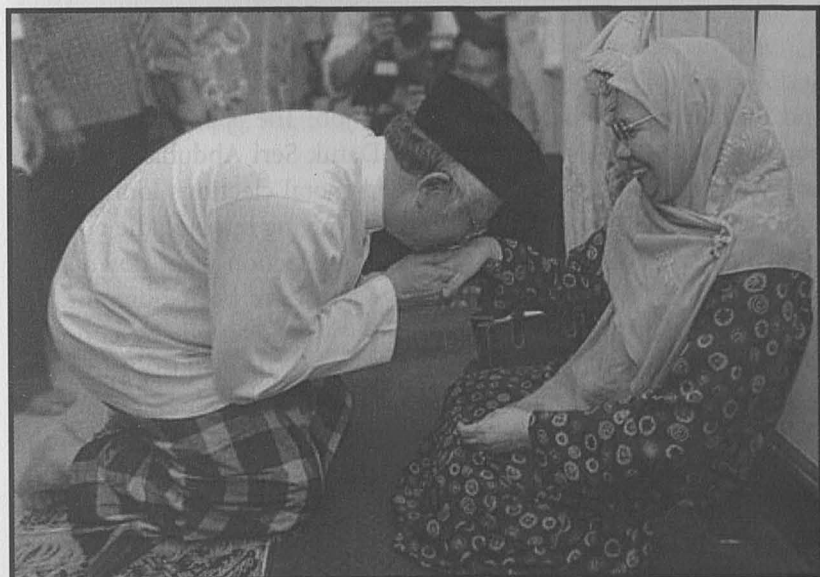
Rosmah with Najib on his first day as Deputy Prime Minister.



A loving couple – Najib and Rosmah having breakfast together.

8

APPOINTMENT OF DPM – REACTION AND ACCEPTANCE



THE CABINET'S APPROVAL

A day after receiving the letter of appointment at 2:45pm on January 6, 2008 from Anwar, Nizam attended his first cabinet meeting. He didn't think much of it. His appointment came as no surprise to the members of the cabinet. He himself had some concern.

APPOINTMENT OF DPM – REACTION AND ACCEPTANCE



All quarters gave the thumbs up to the appointment of Datuk Seri Najib as Deputy Prime Minister. They described it as timely, and that he was the best leader for the job. The appointment of the popular Najib had also strengthened Datuk Seri Abdullah's position as Prime Minister, especially with the general elections looming. As Najib was the senior most vice president - having retained the position in two party elections back-to-back - his selection went down quite well with the UMNO grassroots. It would have been different had Abdullah picked someone else. A crisis was averted. By choosing Najib, Abdullah avoided unnecessary pressure. That left the leadership to focus on winning a big mandate in the coming general elections. Naturally there were various angles and views from all walks of life on the appointment of Najib. Here are the reactions from the cabinet, families, UMNO the Barisan Nasional component parties, and the general public.

THE CABINET'S APPROVAL

A day after receiving the letter of appointment at 5.45pm on January 6, 2004 from Abdullah, Najib attended his first cabinet meeting as deputy prime minister. Although Najib's appointment came as no surprise to the members of the cabinet, he himself had some concern.

His feelings at that time were expressed to the then NSTP Group Chief Editor Datuk Kalimullah Hassan who interviewed him two days after the appointment. According to Najib, he wasn't sure whether to sit at his usual seat as Defence Minister, or at the right of the Prime Minister as the Deputy Prime Minister. He said in order to avoid the dilemma, Najib purposely arrived several minutes late for the meeting on January 7, 2004. He went to the washroom first, with the hope that by the time he got in, Abdullah would have told the cabinet about the appointment, which everyone knew about anyway that morning. Picking up reliable reports, the media and television had headlined the story.

Najib's guess proved correct. When he had yet to come in for the meeting, Abdullah announced Najib's appointment. As soon as the deputy prime minister entered, everyone thumped the table in approval, and he sat next to the prime minister on the right, which was deliberately left vacant for Najib. Recalling those first moments of the cabinet meeting, Najib said:

"I thought to myself, should I sit next to the prime minister's right as the deputy? At the same time some cabinet ministers who might not have heard the news would think I was ahead of myself. I knew, of course, but the others might not. So, I paused at the corridor and went into the men's room to kill time. I decided to enter only after the prime minister made the announcement to the cabinet. So, I waited in the washroom full of anticipation and waited for a few minutes before making an entrance."

When all the ministers applauded at his appearance, he felt relieved as Abdullah had indeed informed them, and Najib could take his place at the prime minister's right.

"That was the way I was introduced as the new Deputy Prime Minister."

Actually, the warm reception to Najib being the deputy prime minister was expected. Needless to say, anyone who appointed to the

post would get the same reception. Moreover, Najib was no stranger to the cabinet members. He was among the longest-serving ministers since taking on the post of Culture, Youth and Sports Minister in 1986. Naturally, the cabinet would accept the fact that it was the prime minister's prerogative. As ministers, they would abide by shared responsibilities of the cabinet. Whatever the decision of the Prime Minister, be it policy or appointment, they would normally concur. Otherwise, they would have to resign. More importantly, the Cabinet members also accepted the fact that as Deputy Prime Minister, Najib also might become Prime Minister one day. Realising the fact, they have to fit in. Even if some don't agree or are disappointed, they just have to hide their feelings. Najib himself understood this reality. If he had not been chosen, he would have to do the same if he wanted to remain in the cabinet. This is the beauty of a government with a cabinet. Leaders come and go. Those who exit are replaced, and the replacements would be welcomed to ensure the continuity of government.

UMNO'S REACTION

Najib's deputation was also widely lauded by UMNO. Leaders at all party levels pledged to support and give cooperation to Najib as the new Deputy Prime Minister. There were no dissenting voices. Even Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, another UMNO Vice-President - who was also tipped to be a contender for the post - congratulated Najib after the cabinet meeting on January 7, 2004. Muhyiddin accepted the Prime Minister's decision as fate and did not show disappointment. On the contrary, he promised to back both top UMNO leaders. Muhyiddin pledged his undivided loyalty to the PM and DPM.

"I hope all quarters will support Abdullah's choice," Muhyiddin said.

Another UMNO vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhd. Taib took a similar stand. Muhammad described Najib's appointment as appropriate as he was a senior leader in UMNO and the cabinet. The

other UMNO leaders - including the heads of the Wanita, Youth and Putri - gave their approval. Even party stalwarts such as Tun Musa Hitam, who had worked with Tun Abdul Razak and knew Najib since he was a boy, welcomed the move and described Najib as someone with the highest integrity to become Deputy Prime Minister. Musa was happy as the issue of the deputy prime minister's post which had sent pulses racing since Abdullah became prime minister, had been resolved quite amicably by Abdullah. Musa also expressed confidence that the Abdullah-Najib partnership would raise the country' to new heights.

FAMILY REACTION

Naturally, Najib's family swelled with pride over his empowering. This was due to the fact that a record of sorts had been created in Tun Razak's family, as he had been deputy prime minister at one time. Najib did not hide his joy at the news of his appointment. As soon as he left the Prime Minister's office after receiving his letters of appointment, he contacted his mother Tun Rahah Noah, and phoned his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor to tell them the news. In the evening, his siblings gathered at their eldest brother's house at Taman Duta to hear the news from Najib himself.

At the request of the media which swamped his mother for comments and interviews, Tun Rahah held a press conference the next day. It wasn't only about the appointment, but also about Najib when he was a boy. Naturally, she was proud of her eldest son and grateful that he had become Deputy Prime Minister, the post that her late husband had once held. As a caring mother who wanted her son to do well in politics, she advised Najib to carry out the trust placed on him with honesty and sincerity and to seriously heed the people's needs. She also expressed hope that Najib would not let the job of deputy prime minister go to his head. Tun Rahah, who was then 70, did not forget to thanked Abdullah who had placed his trust in her son.

" Thank God , as a mother I feel proud of Najib who has the confidence of Abdullah to assume the post of Deputy Prime

Minister, which at one time was held by his (Najib's) late father. On behalf of my family I thank Abdullah and I pray that Najib will aid Abdullah just as his father had supported Tunku Abdul Rahman during independence."

Najib's wife, Rosmah, also could not hide her joy over her husband's appointment. *The Star* newspaper on January 8, 2004, quoted her as saying, "At this time, I still have not fully taken in the news of my husband's appointment as Deputy Prime Minister. I can't say for sure yet how it will change my life but I see that we will bear greater responsibilities." As the Second Lady of the nation, she also pledged to foster cooperation with the Prime Minister's wife, as the First Lady, especially in running the Charity Association of the Wives of Ministers and Deputy Ministers, BAKTI.

Najib's children similarly made their commitments. A few days after the assigning, Najib and his family were pestered by the media to have their pictures taken for that historic occasion. Najib had made it clear to his children when he became deputy prime minister that they might not have as much time together as before. His daughter Nooryana Najwa seemed to have been ready to face such a possibility. She said: "We always spent our Saturday evenings watching football on television and I think that might change as my father will be busier with his new responsibilities." She added, "I would love to spend more time with him but I understand that it was his dream to one day become Deputy Prime Minister." The view was shared by her younger brother Ashman Razak, who acknowledged that since their father's appointment, he became the centre of attention at school and felt uneasy at times with the new experience.

GENERAL REACTION

Najib's designation and the minor cabinet reshuffle which included the filling of the post of Second Finance Minister with Tan Sri Nor Mohamad Yakcop, had a bullish effect on Bursa Malaysia. On the day the appointment was announced, the Composite Index (CI)

of the local bourse shot up to the highest level since the 1997 financial crisis. The CI went up by 18.47 points to close at 805.76, breaking the psychological 800-point level which also marked the apex of the bourse for 2004. A day after the new high, the CI exceeded even that, by 7.44 points to close at 813.20. Other nations also welcomed the appointment. In a year since became deputy prime minister, the CI fluctuated within the 900-point average.

Apart from strengthening the position of Abdullah, UMNO, BN and the country, Najib's promotion, according to some political analysts, would avert a power struggle - at least for the time being - within UMNO, like what occurred in the UMNO elections of 1987 and 1993. In the 1987 elections, all the top posts were contested by two factions which were jostling for power - Team A and Team B. In the 1993 party elections, Anwar Ibrahim, exploited the Vision Team to wipe out his opponents. Both these events jeopardised UMNO unity and stability. According to political analysts another titanic power struggle within UMNO might have occurred again if Abdullah had not chosen Najib.

Political observers hypothesized that if there was any UMNO stalwart who could weaken Abdullah's position, it would be Najib. They said it could happen if Najib refused to accept a candidate other than him, for example Muhyiddin, for the deputy premiership. According to this line of thinking - which is entirely theoretical - Najib, or his ally, would mutiny if he was denied the post, this time by Abdullah, previously by Dr. Mahathir in 1999. Supposedly, Muhyiddin Yassin and Muhammad would not have enough clout to threaten Abdullah's position as individuals or together. But it would be different with Najib, who had proven his worth in two party elections of his strong support in the ranks. By naming Najib to the deputy premiership, Abdullah, according to the observers, had made a political decision which would benefit himself and bring victory in the general elections and consolidate his own position as UMNO President after that.

But such an assumption, which was purposely postulated by certain quarters, might not hold water. Najib had repeatedly stressed his philosophy of struggle to remain loyal to the boss, whoever that might be. When Dr. Mahathir was prime minister, the fidelity was towards him; as with Abdullah. Najib swore undivided loyalty to Abdullah. The question of Najib threatening Abdullah's position did

not arise. Najib himself pointed to his own record of not challenging anyone, let alone jostling for power with others in UMNO in his 30 years in politics. He only offered himself for a post when there was a vacancy; and only if there was enough support. Otherwise, he was content with what he had.

Realising that the post of deputy prime minister is a hot seat if he takes one false move, he made it clear right from the beginning that his main role was to implement the political and national agenda as mapped out by the Prime Minister. As Deputy Prime Minister, he knows that he does not have the executive powers to do what the prime minister does. This awareness had made him a deputy loyal to the number one and not a deputy who tries to go his own way whenever the chief executive is not in the country. If such an understanding exists between the number one and number two, there would be no friction. Of course there would be some who urge Najib to defy his boss, but as he himself had said, such inflammatory rhetoric will not work. Najib told Abdullah at the adjournment of his first cabinet meeting as deputy prime minister: "I will always remind myself that that I am the number two to Datuk Seri (Abdullah). With the passing of time I hope I will convince Datuk Seri that your trust in me was vindicated."

Right or wrong, only time will tell. But so far, Najib stays true to his pledge for all to see as a loyal deputy to Abdullah.

9

DPM - DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



DPM - DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



The Deputy Prime Minister's post is the second highest after the Prime Minister. The power to appoint and dismiss the Deputy Prime Minister is the absolute prerogative of Prime Minister. The post is strategic for someone aspiring to the premiership. With the exception of Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first prime minister, the four premiers after him - Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Tun Hussein Onn, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and now Datuk Seri Abdullah - all came to the top post by way of the deputy's post. That is why politicians who aspire to the highest office in the land, also covert the post of deputy prime minister after being a cabinet minister. Some made no bones about their ambitions to become one. Others expressed their wishes, but in oblique or indirect ways. In the present context of politics in which the Barisan Nasional (BN) is the ruling party, anyone who wants to be the deputy prime minister must try to jockey for positions as one of the three UMNO vice-presidents. Whenever there is an opening for the deputy prime minister's post, the Prime Minister normally appoints one of them to the vacant post. After being named Deputy Prime Minister, he automatically assumes the duties of the UMNO deputy president, if he hasn't yet become one or the BN Deputy Chairman.

DPM's IN MALAYSIAN POLITICAL HISTORY

Najib is the ninth Deputy Prime Minister. The first Deputy Prime Minister was his father Tun Abdul Razak Hussein (1957-1970);

followed by Tun Dr. Ismail Abdul Rahman (1970 - 1973), Tun Hussein Onn (1974 - 1976), Tun Dr. Mahathir (1976 - 1981) , Tan Sri Musa Hitam (1981 - 1986), Tun Abdul Ghafar Baba (1986 - 1993), Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim (1993 - 1998) and Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (1999 - 2003). It must also be clarified that although the deputy prime minister's post was created when the country became independent, it is not a post enshrined under the federal constitution. The job was created by Tunku Abdul Rahman for two reasons. Firstly, to define the chain of command after him in the government and party. For that the Tunku appointed Tun Abdul Razak who was already UMNO Deputy President when the country became independent to fill the post of Deputy Prime Minister. The second reason is for administrative purposes so that all would know who to refer matters to whenever the Tunku was away. At the same time, the Tunku delegated many tasks to the number two man in the party and government. Since the tradition came into being, a vacancy in the Deputy Prime Minister's post could quickly be filled, which would not be left vacant for too long.

As the post is not provided for under the federal constitution, the candidate appointed will not take the oath of office as the deputy prime minister. He would therefore swear an oath of allegiance as a member of the cabinet. His position as deputy prime minister would later be decided by the Prime Minister. The bottom line is, that the specific duties of the deputy prime minister are non-existent. The duties of the deputy prime minister would be defined by the prime minister from time to time. However, in general his duties are to assist the prime minister in carrying out the work agenda and policies decided by the prime minister. When the Prime Minister is not available, the deputy prime minister carries out the tasks of the prime minister in government and party. This includes decision-making on various matters related to the management of government such as chairing the weekly cabinet meeting and others.

Although not a post provided by the federal constitution, the protocol position of the deputy prime minister in the administrative system is high. He is given the title Yang Amat Berhormat YAB like the prime minister. The other ministers are only given the honorific term Yang Berhormat YB (Right Honourable), the same as the members of parliament and state assemblymen. Apart from the prime minister and deputy prime minister, only the Mentris Besar and

Chief Ministers carry the honourific title YAB. During state occasions and official functions, the deputy prime minister sits on the prime minister's right. When the prime minister is abroad, the deputy prime minister chairs the weekly cabinet meeting held every Wednesday at the Prime Minister's Department. Because of that the prime minister and deputy prime minister coordinate their working trips abroad. That is aimed at avoiding a situation when both are not available at home. The deputy prime minister also carries out as the representative of the prime minister from time to time. For example, when Abdullah cannot attend various state functions or celebrations, Najib would fill in. If Najib is indisposed, another minister will take his place. As a deputy prime minister, Najib is also accorded a retinue of security officers comprising the Police during official and private functions. Other than the prime minister and deputy prime minister, only the hereditary Malay rulers and Yang Di-Pertuas Negeri have this honour. The size of the security teams guarding him and his family have also been boosted, compared to when he was just a minister.

As the post of deputy prime minister has no specific task, the holder is usually given another cabinet post. What exactly is the post depends on the prime minister. When he was deputy prime minister, Razak had stints in the portfolios of Defence, Education and Rural Development. Hussein, apart from being the prime minister, was at the same time the Finance Minister. Tun Dr. Ismail, Dr. Mahathir, Musa Hitam and Abdullah Badawi had held the posts of Home Minister at different times when they were deputy prime minister. Ghafar was Rural Development Minister. Anwar Ibrahim held the Finance portfolio when he was deputy prime minister. From time to time, they were all placed in positions of trust in different capacities by the prime minister.

As deputy prime minister, Najib was also defence minister - a post which he continued to hold after the 1999 general elections. Abdullah also gave him the task of Felda affairs. Felda had been under the purview of the Land and Cooperatives Development Ministry. After the cabinet reshuffle following the 2004 general elections, Abdullah decided to abolish the ministry. Felda then became the responsibility of Najib while the cooperatives came under the purview of the Entrepreneur Development Ministry, which was re-named the Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development Ministry.

As deputy prime minister, Najib also chairs the National Disaster and Relief Committee. He also heads 17 cabinet committees made up of certain cabinet ministers. Apart from that, Najib also acts in the capacity of Deputy Chairman for the Cabinet Committee chaired by the prime minister. This cabinet committee actually has cabinet powers in drawing up national policies. This means, as deputy prime minister, the areas of powers are wide-ranging. In essence, the decisions of the cabinet committee become national policies unless the prime minister vetoes them. Normally, the prime minister accepts whatever decisions made by the cabinet committee.

DPM - NAJIB'S PLEDGE

In several interviews after being named deputy prime minister, Najib unequivocally maintained that he was there “to support and aid the Prime Minister, especially in achieving the national and party agenda.” According to Najib, the prime minister sets the agenda for the nation and the party and “my main job is to help the agenda to be translated. Naturally, the prime minister will allocate certain functions.” As a deputy prime minister who is fully aware that he does not share power with the prime minister, Najib also pledged, “I will be the number two loyal to the Chief.” The message was repeated often after he took up the post. Najib gave assurances that he would not go his own way. He fully abides by this philosophy. Several of his supporters who sought endorsement for several of their projects which he has no overseeing powers, were flatly told that they would get no aid from him. Some journalists also spoke about how he declined to comment on certain issues ahead of the prime minister. The stock reply would be, “This matter should be replied by the Prime Minister.”

It was clear that Najib did not want to be an assistant who took the initiative over his boss. He doesn't want to be another Musa Hitam. Musa, or some of the chief editors close to him when he was deputy prime minister to Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, had no qualms about giving the impression that he was sharing power with the prime minister, or at least had some powers of the prime minister. The media even dubbed the administration as 2M - Mahathir and

Musa. It was as if Mahathir and Musa were sharing executive powers. Dr. Mahathir was widely known to have been rather uneasy about this portrayal. However, he did nothing at first to correct this image. For to him the tiger does not change its stripes. As Musa thought he was sharing power with Dr. Mahathir, he assumed that anything he proposed to the prime minister would be accepted and implemented. When Musa suggested to Dr. Mahathir that he sack Tengku Razaleigh because Razaleigh was adamant in contesting for the UMNO Deputy Presidency again in the 1984 party elections, the relations between the two soured. After that, Musa felt sidelined when his views were not heeded. He felt slighted and resigned his party post and government posts. After much persuasion, he returned to his party position. Ironically, with the cooperation of Tengku Razaleigh and four other ministers, he launched an assault on Dr. Mahathir's leadership in the 1987 UMNO polls.

Musa himself admitted in several interviews after he had retired from politics that he erred in his role as deputy prime minister as far as Dr. Mahathir was concerned. He said if he realised that he should have been a deputy to aid the prime minister, it would not have led to the falling out between them. In that situation, Musa had overstepped his bounds. He could not take back his words, and he suffered the consequences. Ghafar Baba, who was appointed deputy prime minister to replace Musa, knew very well his position as the number two in government and party. However, he, in turn, was toppled by another UMNO leader who was impatient to become deputy prime minister and prime minister - Anwar Ibrahim. Abdullah Badawi, who took Anwar's place as the deputy, held fast to his role as an assistant to the prime minister and not get ahead of himself.

Early on Najib took great pains to show that he was a conscientious deputy prime minister. He wanted to follow in the footsteps of his father, Razak who was a loyal and true deputy prime minister to Tunku Abdul Rahman. Razak held the post for 13 years before becoming the prime minister in September 1970. Despite attempts by some to goad Razak into toppling the Tunku, he remained loyal. Najib seem to be the same. He had already given assurances that any bid to bring him and Abdullah into a confrontation, will fail. Najib will not entertain *agent provocateurs* who want to ruin the good ties between the two. Abdullah also takes the same stand. He said that any bid to clash him

with Najib will not work. Abdullah reminded all quarters to forget such ideas, and instead focus on working the national agenda which he mapped out.

THE RE-BRANDING OF FELDA - NAJIB'S CHALLENGE

Prior to Felda coming under Najib's supervision in the Prime Minister's department, the land development agency was the purview of the Land and Cooperatives Development Ministry. When announcing the cabinet reshuffle in March 2004, Datuk Seri Abdullah decided to abolish the ministry. The agency was brought under the Prime Minister's Department while the other components of the defunct ministry were merged with the erstwhile Entrepreneur Development Ministry to form the Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development Ministry. At the Prime Minister's Department Najib was appointed minister to oversee Felda. It became clear that for Abdullah, Felda - which turned fifty in July 2006 - is a vital component of the country's development and as such should be managed better. Felda was formed under the Land Development Act 1956 with two key roles. Firstly, to raise the standard of living for pioneer land settlers through a dedicated and efficient management system continuously while improving yield and profit from products. Secondly, to foster social development by increasing productivity and discipline through working on the land. Najib's father supervised the initial stage of Felda aimed at giving the rural poor a chance to settle newly opened land projects as pioneers and make good wages from the land they own.

After 50 years, Felda - which was originally known as Federal Land Development Board (the name change was made by Musa Hitam when he was its chairman) - now has 115,000 settler families in 278 land projects or schemes. To give some idea the size of the projects, just imagine linking with roads all the land schemes. It would be 5,000 kilometres - five times the length of the North-South Highway which links Johor Bharu in the south to Bukit Kayu Hitam in the north. Some 800,000 hectares of land had been developed, planted either with rubber or oil palm, or even both. Two-thirds of all the schemes

are worked by share-croppers or small-holders, while the rest are run as plantations by Felda itself. Felda began with a RM 8 billion loan from the World Bank and the federal government. The loans were all settled 14 years ahead on time - in 1996 instead of 2010. The World Bank, which is well-known for being sceptical with huge projects in developing countries, instead came away very impressed and declared Felda as the most successful project for poverty eradication in the World. Based on research, settlers enjoyed higher wages than before they moved to the settlements. The average monthly wage was about RM 1,000 a month.

In the process of land development, Felda might have wiped out thousands of hectares of natural forests and greenery, but it was well worth it. Now Felda contributes RM 8.5 billion a year to the country's Gross Domestic Product and yields 12.5% of the World's total palm oil production. Felda, as a scheme which became the pride of the Third World, had provided a better life for some 115,000 people who were originally landless. The settlers and their families live in much better housing than they had before, with safe running water and electricity 24 hours a day. Their quality of life improved - life-spans increased and infant mortality plunged. Literacy rates rose dramatically. The children of settlers were found to be doing significantly better in schools compared to their counterparts who lived in the traditional kampungs. 70% of of the latest generation of Felda youths went on to tertiary education. The 30% who didn't quite make are given trade or vocational skills to reduce the incidence of social ills in the land settlements.

Although Felda became a success in its original objective, the government would not rest on its laurels. Like any growing entity, it needs to be revitalised from time to time in order for Felda to meet challenges from the ever-changing world. Apathy set in, which, left unchecked would completely undo everything that Felda had achieved thus far. After 50 years, productivity of settlers had declined. With most settlers being from the original pioneering schemes, they became too old to work as vigorously as they once did. The result was that the areas of the crops shrank, while even the productive tracts of land were left to fallow, as crops were left unharvested. Re-planting was encouraged to re-invigorate the rubber and palm oil yields. The settlers were given incentives of RM 1,000 for every hectare replanted. Some settlers

were receptive, but others seemed to have lost interest. An increasing number of settlers - especially near the Klang Valley - sold out as soon as they had fulfilled the contract period and received their ownership grants. They succumbed to temptation of offers from land speculators and developers who promised them millions in return for the land. It wouldn't be surprising, as they were eyeing the bright lights of the city after many years of back-breaking work. With the land securely under their ownership, it would be hard to resist the opportunity to take cash instead. Why not sell their land and pocket the promised millions of ringgit and live in a more desirable urban setting? Settlers at the Sungai Buaya settlement in Selangor and Labu in Negeri Sembilan did just that, but there was a catch that they didn't anticipate. Their cash didn't come in one lump sum. They found that they would receive payments in installments. Even with steady payments, many former settlers neglected their finances and blew whatever money they had in hand, leaving them destitute. They get by as beggars in the land settlements, and in their advanced age they would not be able to work again. These people are a burden to Felda.

Another problem is that the second generation of settlers have spurned the work of their pioneering fathers. Many have let for good, seeking jobs in the cities. Those with college degrees found the new life easier. But those who are not sufficiently equipped for a different setting remained in the land schemes, doing odd jobs or just being vagrants. In some Felda settlements, the original schemes reverted to the traditional kampung setting, with its social ills. Drug addictions, petty crimes, prostitution, even incest have been reported from time to time. The result is declining productivity. In schemes which are managed as estates, productivity rose to 20 tonnes per hectare, which exceeded the national average of 19 tonnes. It looks impressive, but the private conglomerate plantations have much higher productivity.

So, while some see Felda as a success, others state that Felda has under-utilised assets. They say Felda had yet to reach its full potential. Of course, there had been earlier attempts to maximise its potential as hinted by chairman Tan Sri Yusof Nor in several media statements. There were plans to plant teak trees on both sides of the 5,000 km of roads to and from the Felda schemes in the hope to produce wood worth RM 10 million a year for the settlers. Meanwhile, the replanting of palm oil was stepped up. Rubber - which was often at the mercy of

global price fluctuations - was gradually replaced by oil palm, which had seen rather steady world demand. Rubber had to compete with its synthetic version. Still, three Felda settlements were earmarked as Felda Jaya, or successful schemes; in the south, north and east. Under this programme the chosen sites are developed as commercial entities, with the construction of four-room homes to be sold to the settlers or their second-generation successors. The schemes will be equipped with modern amenities, even colleges and light industrial zones.

As Prime Minister, Abdullah realises that if Felda is to be relevant in the 21st century, it cannot go along *ad hoc*. Felda will not be competitive, and it might even fall apart. Therefore, he outlined several new strategies to revive Felda in efforts to bring a better life to some 115,000 families of settlers and their dependents, which total over 600,000 people. The five-point strategy was announced on Settlers' Day at Felda Mempaga Dua in Bentong, Pahang on January 2004. They are:

- Introduce a variety of economic activities, industries, businesses as sources of supplementary income, other than planting.
- Introduce more methods of education for settlers, including the new generation.
- Ensure that a region, one product programme is implemented thoroughly.
- Set up more small and medium-scale industries based on farming.
- Mobilise the second generation of settlers to carry out the social development programmes.

Abdullah's declaration was a plan to revitalise Felda, or what is nowadays known as re-branding and re-positioning as the most successful national product, as a role model for other nations. To make this a reality is no doubt a daunting task, which is placed squarely on the shoulders of Najib as the minister responsible for Felda. Najib is well-known as a man of action - moved swiftly. On August 13 2004, he directed Felda to put itself on a global footing in the future, bearing in mind that it was the most successful land settlement pioneering

scheme in the World. As part of this programme, he ordered that a study be done to see whether the Felda concept can be implemented in other countries. He said:

"Make Felda the biggest land owner in the nation as a global player. We want Felda to shine on the international stage."

Najib also pressed the importance of entrepreneur development, non-plantation activities, as well as increasing the variety of products with updated packaging and branding to be distributed through the Felda community, as an effort to raise the settlers' standard of living. Najib is convinced that getting Felda settlers to go in non-planting economic activities such as being entrepreneurs should be done to improve their quality of life. He targeted 30% or 35,000 of the 115,000 settlers to be entrepreneurs by the end of 2015. The actual figure reached so far is 20%. Only 21,578 pioneer settlers have taken the plunge into commercial livestock-raising, aquaculture, commercial planting, industries and services. He stated:

"Creating a large class of entrepreneurs in the schemes' communities is critical to the strategy of achieving a quantum leap in the Felda land schemes."

In order to achieve this objective, Felda introduced several incentive schemes to encourage settlers and the younger generation to become entrepreneurs. This is vital as the income from just planting is no longer adequate. Najib said the settlers must be better educated and acquire skills in management and be willing to take a new approach in business to be entrepreneurs. He urged them to be willing to take risks, be more creative, hard-working and disciplined. He declared that they should be a global strategy to jump-start their success:

"In the era of globalisation and liberalisation which brings intense competition, everyone, organisation and the nation must reorganise and implement a global strategy so that they can compete on the international stage."

Najib expressed confidence that if they can be successful in non-planting activities, their income can rise from between RM 1,100 to RM 1,200 a month (depending on the factors of prices and productivity) to RM 2,000.

CABINET COMMITTEE - ROLE AND POWERS

In an interview with *The Sun* newspaper on the myriad of duties he bears as Deputy Prime Minister, Najib informed that the Prime Minister had placed his trust in Najib to head 16 cabinet committees. He also said he acts as Deputy Chairman in the cabinet committee chaired by the Prime Minister himself. What is a cabinet committee? What is the role and powers in relation to the Cabinet?

In the context of government and politics, the cabinet is the highest executive level which can decide on policies and the management of the country. The cabinet is based on the British concept, made up of a select group of senior politicians. In Malaysia, members of the cabinet are from UMNO's senior leaders and heads of the other Barisan Nasional component parties. Each member or minister is given a certain portfolio. Nevertheless, in the interests of coordination and the scrutiny of specialised policies, cabinet committees were formed. In short, cabinet committees are formed to specific policies. Usually the prime minister or deputy prime minister chairs each cabinet committee. A problem of protocol would arise if a cabinet committee is chaired by a minister. Regardless of the seniority of a minister, every one is equal in status in the cabinet. It is normal to expect ministers to be protective of their own ministries, and would not accept another minister encroaching into their own guarded niche. The exception, of course, would be the Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister. If a cabinet committee is headed by a minister, the colleagues would not heed the views of the chairman. This would be counter productive.

Even in normal times, no minister would relinquish the overseeing powers of an agency under him or her, to another ministry. A good example is the supervision of private radio and television. At one time, under the Broadcasting Act, the powers were under the Information Ministry. However, when the act was amended and the

Communications and Multimedia Act introduced, the supervisory functions came under the watch of the Multimedia Commission, which is the agency of the Energy, Water and Multimedia Ministry. When Datuk Kadir Shiekh Fadzir was appointed Information Minister, he set out to bring radio and television under his ministry. He aimed at controlling radio and television in the country. The reality is that he had no such clout. His only function is to oversee broadcasting under government. He claimed that this scenario made it hard for him to set a national agenda. In his mind, private broadcasting was subservient to business or commercial interests, resulting in content that might not be suited to the national agenda. But he could do little but complain. He lobbied hard for the right to be the watch-dog of the country's private electronic media. He did not succeed. The Energy, Water and Multimedia Ministry headed by Datuk Seri Dr.Lim Keng Yaik retained his purview. Still, Kadir did not give up. In July 20, 2005, his ministry submitted a memorandum to the government asking for a reversion of the supervisory role over private broadcasting. Following that, the cabinet formed a sub-committee chaired by Najib to look into such a possibility.

The cabinet committee was given full authority to "make a decision which would be approved by the cabinet. Through the committee, proposals would be studied in detail by members of the panel, along with senior government officials who would give their input as well. They would later come up with a draft legislation or other proposals for the cabinet's consideration. For that reason when the report comes to the cabinet, it would not need to be thrashed out again. Only a decision would be forthcoming. Although the cabinet has the full authority to decide, sometimes the call can be made by the committee itself. Ultimately, though, the cabinet has the final say. The cabinet can direct the committee to re-evaluate the decision if the cabinet had disagreed. A cabinet committee also has the role to strengthen the political ties and coordination among bureaucrats. The frequency of their meetings is not fixed. Some panels meet once or twice a week, or twice a month. Others only meet when a pressing issue suddenly arises.

It can be concluded that in the country's experience and for other nations that practice a cabinet system of administration, a cabinet committee has five main roles. Prominent academician Elizabeth Mcleay in her book *The Cabinet and Political Power* analysed the

archetypical cabinet based on her experience in New Zealand. Firstly, the cabinet committee is a way of relieving the burden of the cabinet. Secondly, it's a participatory body which enables ministers to sound out feedback from experts, acting as a forum to encourage the exchange of ideas and views. Thirdly, the cabinet committee eases the tension between ministers over formulation of policy, allowing open debate at a reasonable level. Open confrontation among policy-makers would be avoided. From the political point of view, a clash between members of the cabinet would be staved off and prevent an emotional fall-out. The fourth point is that the cabinet committee, if managed well, can be used to strengthen the leadership with the political parties. It's up to the Prime Minister to allocate membership of the cabinet committees based on politics. And lastly, as with other committees, the cabinet committee is used to coordinate the formulation and implementation of policies to fulfill the national agenda. In this context, the cabinet committee usually comes up with a decision based on the parameters set out by the prime minister. If the prime minister is open, the cabinet committee may also conclude with something different that what he had in mind.

As Deputy Prime Minister, among the cabinet committees that Najib often chairs are: Foreign workers, the National Service, Sports development, squatters in the Klang Valley, ways and means of increasing the income of settlers through commodity industries, and national cleanliness.

SPORTS AS A NATIONAL AGENDA

During the weekly cabinet meeting on September 15, 2004, the Prime Minister gave the blessing for the formation of a cabinet committee on sports, which was tasked with drawing up a blueprint for the long-term development of sports. Najib was appointed to head the committee which is made up of 13 other ministers whose ministries are either directly or indirectly linked to sports development. The Youth and Sports Ministry was made the secretariat of the panel. The setting up of the cabinet committee showed how serious the government was in making sports a national agenda which would raise the country's

profile at home and abroad, especially in the Olympic Games. It had been generally agreed that Malaysia had performed rather dismally on the world stage, with the national contingent often coming back empty-handed during recent games, as shown during the Greece Olympics in 2004. The government was clearly disappointed and decided that something substantial must be done to reverse the decline. The Prime Minister called for a change in mind-set from the “village champion”, to a more competitive outlook. As the development of sports requires more than just one ministry, the cabinet committee was formed to resolve the bickering among sports officials and athletes. Najib went to work immediately.

On November 8, 2004, the committee announced a master plan to develop sports in the longer term. In the first phase, eight sporting events had been identified for more intensive development. They are Badminton, Ten-Pin Bowling, Squash, Gymnastics, Hockey, Track and Field, Swimming and Football. These eight events are to be given special treatment in financial aid and infrastructure development. The respective agencies must abide by a pact which requires them to be more accountable. They will be judged based on results from the 2006 Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games. According to Najib, with the exception of football, the seven other sports had shown marked improvement in international meets. As an added incentive for athletes preparing for the Olympic Games, Najib promised that all athletes do well would be well rewarded by the nation. He made the pledge in February 14, 2004: “Pension will be given to those who win gold, silver and bronze medals so that they will have a secure life after retirement. This is because the Olympics is the highest stage in which athletes can aspire to. “

However, during a committee meeting on March 30 of that year, the pensions scheme was changed to a monthly reward scheme to avoid confusion with a government pension scheme for retirees. For gold medal winners, the fixed reward is RM 3,000 a month, while silver and bronze awards would respectively garner RM 2,000 and RM 1,000 a month. The life-long reward would be paid beginning from the date the athlete emerges victorious in the Olympics. It is interesting to note that past winners were not forgotten. The rewards were conferred on former national shuttlers Razif and Jailani Sidek who won gold at the Barcelona games in 1992, albeit in an exhibition event, and Cheah

Soon Kit and Yap Kim Hock who grabbed silver at the Atlanta event in 1996, and Rashid Sidek who won bronze. The special allocation, however, would not be extended to their next-of-kin when they pass away. For those who win more than one medal, they would only be paid one reward - but the highest one. Other incentives - cash and kind- will also be awarded for other international games, to both the winning athletes and their coaches.

Najib is aware that high hopes have been placed on him for results to be shown as described in the catch-phrase "Glory, Excellence and Distinction". He has taken a moderate approach. He said, "Success in sports in the international level, especially the Olympics, is a long-term matter. It cannot be done overnight. We have to be realistic and not expect miracles to occur." He wants all quarters to help in the effort to achieve the national aspirations. He also saw another dimension for sports in fulfilling the national agenda. He wants as many people as possible to take part in sports. Recently, the research done by the Youth and Sports Ministry showed that only half a million people out of a population of 23 million do so, and only between 18 and 22 percent are active in sports on a daily basis compared to 60% in the developed nations. "The government has made sports as a national agenda. We see sports as important at the grassroots level, not only for produce healthier citizens, but also as a tool for unity," he said two days after being appointed to head the cabinet committee for sports on September 14, 2004.

To get the masses involved in sports more widely, the cabinet committee on February 14, 2005 decided to develop the Community Sports Centre concept at every state assembly constituency nationwide under the 9th Malaysia plan. The committee agreed that an allocation is necessary to set up such centres. It also agreed to a proposal from the Education Ministry to sponsor a national sports education institution, SIPMA as part of the effort to raise the standards of sports at the tertiary level and to organise competitions between colleges. The first SIPMA championship was held in August 2005. Eight events were featured; Badminton, Ten-Pin Bowling, Squash, Gymnastics, Hockey, Athletics and Football.

RESOLVING THE PROBLEM OF SQUATTERS IN THE KLANG VALLEY

As chairman of the cabinet committee on squatters in the Klang Valley, Najib's main task is to tackle head-on the problem of illegal settlements in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and parts of Selangor. The objective is to render the Klang Valley free of chronic illegal housing which are termed as dilapidated, unsystematic and lacking in the basic amenities. Such housing are deemed to be unhealthy and detrimental to social development as well as security. Such settlements were started illegally by taking over government land. They were built by those in the lower-income group but not adhering to even the most basic of safety standards, and are obviously eye-sores. They occur mostly in the Klang Valley where there is a shortage of affordable housing or the rentals are too high for the lower classes. In such a situation, there is little choice but to set up squatter settlements.

The obvious solution is to build more affordable dwellings or housing with low rentals in suitable locations. So, the cabinet committee's task is to ensure that the local authorities and developers build the right kind of housing for the longer term. At the same time, measures must be taken to ensure that no new squatter settlements are built. In order to achieve the target of zero squatters by 2005, the government implemented a programme of public housing offered to squatter dwellers in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. In Kuala Lumpur, 18,628 flats were offered throughout 2005. In Selangor, 64,670 similar units were built and came up for grabs in 2005 to 23,895 squatter families who were selected based on a census in 1998. An excess of low-cost housing were constructed to ensure that supply exceeded demand to reduce the possibility of new squatter settlements after 1998. It also helped to alleviate the plight of the poor by providing the basic amenities.

RAISING THE INCOME OF SMALL-HOLDERS

To alleviate the plight of the small-holders or share-croppers in matters that are beyond their control, the government set up a cabinet committee to find ways and means to raise the incomes of small-holders through small industries. Cocoa was identified as one way for the poor farmers to earn a better living, but the cultivation had declined drastically over the past 15 years. In 1990, there were 393 thousand hectares of cocoa cultivation in the whole country. But by 2005, the area of cocoa farms fell to 45,000 hectares. The loss of interest was attributed to declining cocoa prices in the World market, and farmers moved on to other cash crops. However, the irony is that the country's cocoa imports rose, worth some RM 1 billion. To rectify the situation, the cabinet committee on April 2, 2005, announced a hundred percent grant to aid cocoa farmers. Small-holders with cultivated areas of less than 6 hectares were eligible. Farmers were also given better strains of cocoa seeds to improve yield and quality. For rubber small-holders, permission was given for them to move on to other cash crops which were more lucrative than the depressed rubber industry. Aid was also given to them to start afresh.

On March 25, 2005, the cabinet committee announced a RM 95 million incentive scheme to aid pepper growers in Sarawak and tobacco farmers in Peninsular Malaysia. According to Najib, RM 10.5million had been set aside for a fund to aid tobacco farmers to grow alternative crops and mitigate the effects of the government imposing punitive measures on smokers as well as pressures of a more liberalised market. Najib said tobacco planters, especially in Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah and Perlis need to practice mixed farming to boost their incomes. It was estimated that 100,000 small-holders depend on the domestic tobacco market. Seventy percent of incentives for tobacco farmers would be given in the form of loans with low interest rates while 30 % in the form of grants. An allocation of RM 84.5 million approved for the programme to boost the incomes of pepper farmers are being used between 2005 and 2010 for 67,000 families in Sarawak who are struggling against falling prices and plant disease. RM 14.5 million of the totals are to be used for re-planting pepper using new clones of higher quality.

NATIONAL DISASTER AND RELIEF COMMITTEE

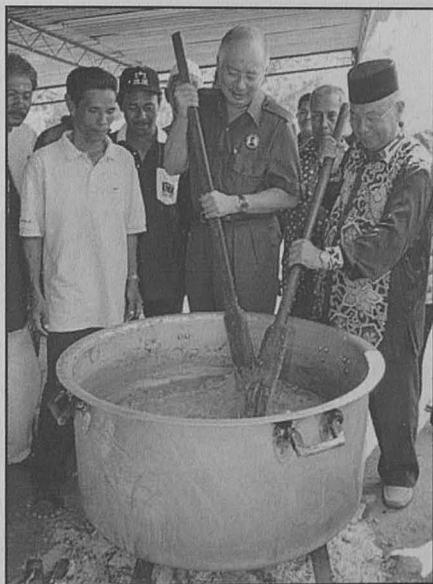
The job of chairman of the national disaster and relief cabinet committee is seasonal. The committee was formed by the government to deal effectively with natural calamities, such as floods, landslides, earthquakes or the tsunami which occurred on December 26, 2004. The panel prepares for the possibility of the disasters, eg. during the rainy season in anticipation of floods, and the distribution of aid and their rescue during the deluge. The aid can be in the form of cash or kind, given directly from the National Disaster Relief Committee under the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry. The committee is also responsible for coordinating aid collected from donors such as non-governmental bodies or the private sector to ensure there are no irregularities.

The committee distributes the assistance to the victims and make sure only those deserving receive the aid. In times of emergency, there would be a proliferation of opportunists, some not really deserving. They take advantage of the government and generous donors, all in the name of humanitarianism - but at the expense of genuine victims. This is one of the challenges facing the national disaster and relief committee- how to spot the genuine from the fake. Before Najib headed the panel, it had been under the supervision of the Information Minister. But as the job requires far more wide-ranging authority to smoothen the functions, the Deputy Prime Minister took over.

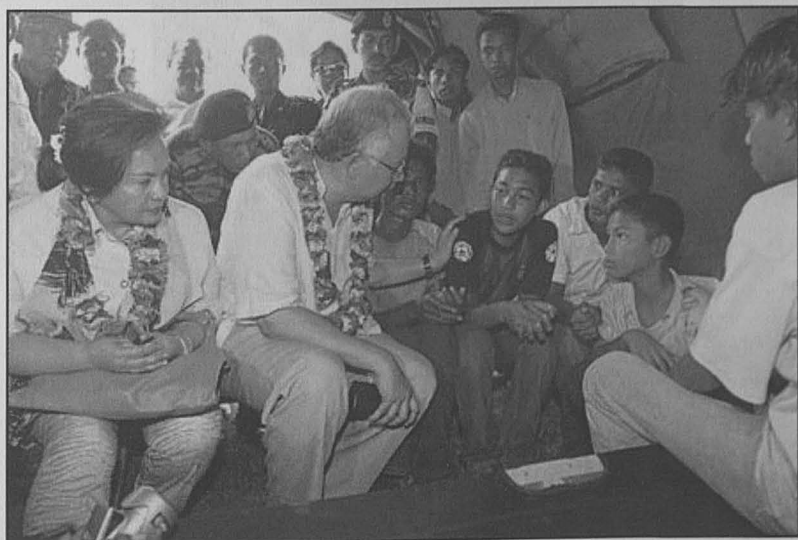
As chairman of the committee, Najib showed his mettle during the tsunami disaster which hit the north-west coast of Peninsular Malaysia in December 2004. When the giant waves reached the shores, the Prime Minister was vacationing in Spain, and only was able to return home on January 6th after cutting short his holiday. The tsunami flooded the holiday resorts of Tanjung Bungah in Penang and fishing communities in Kuala Muda, Kedah. The devastated fishing villages swiftly received aid when Najib took action and mobilised the National Disaster and Relief Committee. As a caring leader, he surveyed the damages and losses less than 24 hours after the tsunami struck. He met many families which lost their loved-ones or bread-winners. Najib and his wife Rosmah visited the victims and tried to console them. He expressed sympathy and showed that the government was sincere in

looking after the people, be it during good times or bad. Najib's visits had brought some measure of relief.

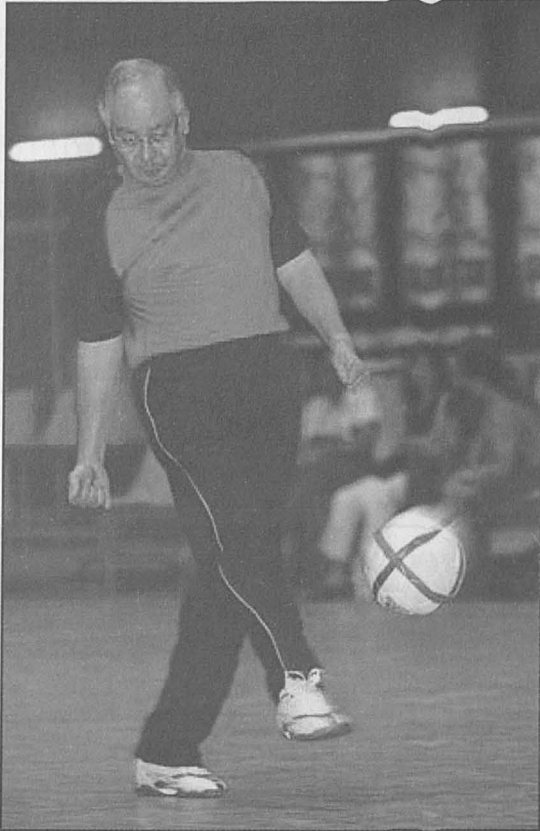
Najib's rapid moves in mobilising the aid and construction of shelters for the homeless, was widely praised. He was also given high marks for formulating a quantum of aid to be distributed, after the overwhelming response from the private sector in donations through special funds set up by the media. Within a brief period, the survivors got back on their feet and returned to some form of normality. Nevertheless, scars remained from the horrific experience. Still the survivors were grateful for the aid they received due to the caring leadership. For Najib, he had gained valuable experience in crisis management, and increased confidence in facing possible future calamities.



Najib is now the number two man, but he does not forget his grassroots support.



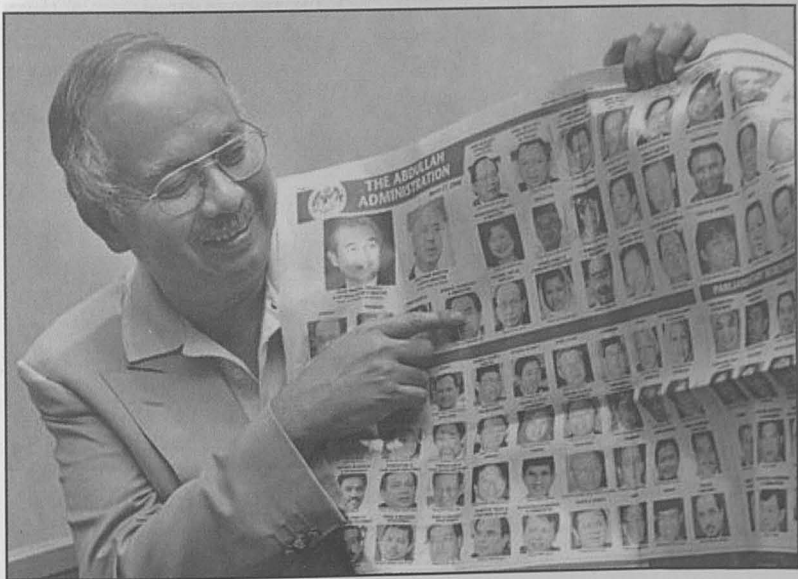
With the victims of the Tsunami in Aceh in early 2005.



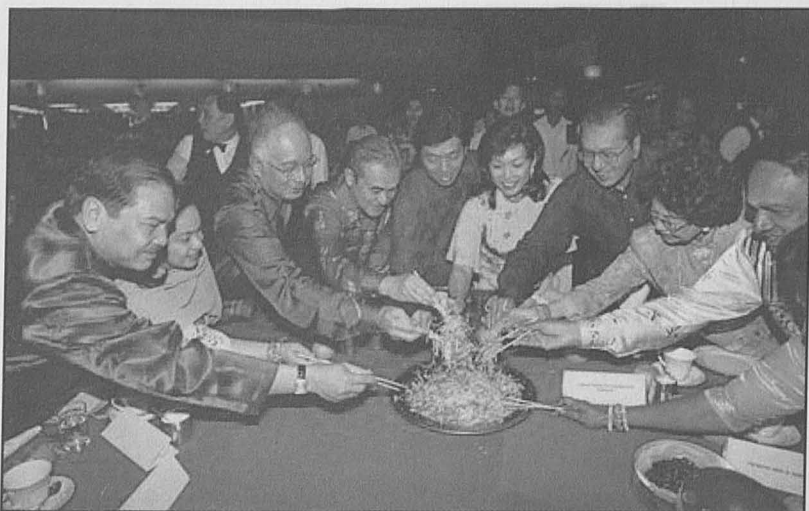
Quite a futsal player.



Accompanying the Prime Minister in Parliament.



Showing the world the new Cabinet line-up after the 2004 General Election.



Najib, Abdullah and other Cabinet ministers attending the MCA Chinese New Year Open House of 2005.



Najib and Abdullah visiting a Felda settlement in Pahang.



Celebrating Christmas with other members of the Cabinet.



Taking oath as Member of Parliament for Pekan after the 2004 General Elections.



Meeting the Tsunami victims in Penang at the end of 2004.



With Abdullah when launching the Barisan Nasional manifesto in the 2004 General Elections.



Waving the Jalur Gemilang on the occasion of Malaysia's national day of 2005.



Najib at a meet-the-people session in his Pekan Parliamentary constituency.



Najib with other members of Parliament after the oath-taking ceremony in the Dewan Rakyat.



Conferred the Selangor award by the Sultan of Selangor.

10

DEPUTY PRESIDENT - DUTIES AND ROLE



DEPUTY PRESIDENT - DUTIES AND ROLE



Datuk Seri Najib was anointed UMNO Deputy President during party elections in conjunction with the UMNO general assembly on September 23, 2004. Prior to that, for 261 days after being appointed Deputy Prime Minister, he was entrusted with the task of the party's deputy president by the supreme council in his capacity as one of the three vice-presidents which he had held since the 1993 UMNO elections. His post as Deputy President could only be confirmed by the general assembly after he went through the process of nomination for the position. He needed at least 20 % of the nominations at the divisional level to contest for the deputy president's post. However, he received more than the required nominations - and he was the sole candidate. By virtue of not having any challenger, Najib showed his popularity. So, he became the ninth deputy president of UMNO. The first deputy president was his father Tun Abdul Razak, followed by Tun Dr. Ismail, Tun Hussein Onn, Tun Dr. Mahathir, Tun Musa, Tun Ghafar Baba, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Datuk Seri Abdullah.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT - POSITION ACCORDING TO THE UMNO CHARTER

The post of deputy president is enshrined under clause 9.2.2 of the UMNO constitution. The eligible candidate can only be a member of

the supreme council other than the president, six candidates including the the vice-presidents, the heads of the Youth, Wanita and Puteri wings, the secretary-general, treasurer, information chief, 25 selected members and 12 members hand-picked by the president, and also at least one representative from the Youth, Wanita and Puteri . As an official in the supreme council, clause 9.8.2 of the party constitution determines two main tasks of the deputy president. Firstly, to assist the president and secondly to chair the supreme council meetings in the absence of the president. Other than that, as deputy president, Najib automatically was appointed chairman of the UMNO management committee which are also made up of the three vice-presidents, the heads of the Youth, Wanita and Puteri wings, the secretary-general, the treasurer-general and information chief. Within UMNO, Najib is also the education bureau chief. Therefore, in the UMNO power structure, the deputy president might not seem to be significant except if the president is not available. The deputy president carries out specific tasks only if the president is indisposed or abroad. However, if the circumstances requires, the deputy president would be the acting president, such as the time when Tun Dr. Mahathir resigned his presidency on October 2004. The position of president can only be confirmed by the general assembly during the regular intervals and party elections. Otherwise, the acting status remains.

In party matters, the deputy president, as with the vice-presidents, in themselves have no real power. But in terms of line of succession, whoever holds the post is in a strategic position to succeed the president when the top post becomes vacant. If one looks at the president as a king, then the deputy president is the crown prince who will inherit the throne. More significant, the deputy president is also appointed the deputy prime minister. In order to understand the importance of the deputy president's role, one must be clear of the duties of the president as a supreme council official, the supreme council itself and the powers of the general assembly. This is because the functions of the president are closely tied with the supreme council as a body which administers UMNO under the powers of the general assembly which meets annually. So, in between general assembly conferences, it is the supreme council that is the top decision-making entity. In the supreme council, the officials who are most powerful are the president and deputy president.

What are the powers of the general assembly when it is adjourned by the supreme council? What are the powers of the supreme council when the general assembly is not in session to decide on matters for the former? How is the president and deputy president's powers executed in relation to the general assembly and supreme council? From whatever view point one looks, power-play has to be examined closely on the general assembly, the supreme council, and the president.

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT AND POWERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THE SUPREME COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Clause 8 in the party charter states that the general assembly is the highest decision-making group in the party based on its directive subject to the constitution and regulations. The charter also states that the general assembly must be held once a year as determined by the supreme council on condition that it is not convened later than 18 months from the date of the previous general assembly session. Clause 8.4, meanwhile, states that the general assembly must be convened by a Permanent Chairman and his deputy, members of the supreme council, the annual delegate of at least one each from all 500 divisions with seven being the maximum. Five others are the Heads of divisions, deputy heads, vice heads, the heads of the Youth, Wanita and Puteri, who automatically becomes delegates to the assembly. The three wings of the party can also send delegates of not more than ten each.

As the highest legislative convention in UMNO, the general assembly has these functions:

- Determine the policies of the party
- Review the tasks of the Supreme Council
- Selecting the members of the Supreme Council
- Selecting the Permanent Chairman and appointing the auditor for the duration of the Supreme Council

In UMNO, the supreme council is “The entity that administers UMNO’s affairs under the powers and directives of the General Assembly and the Supreme Council is empowered to carry out whatever measures on behalf of the general assembly when it is not in session but whatever measures must be informed to the general assembly.” Clause 10 determines the 17 duties of the supreme council:

- Carry out whatever effort along with other groups on politics or other matters deemed suitable for UMNO.
- To receive whatever dues or subscription fees paid through the branches and divisions.
- Select candidates for general elections of the Dewan Rakyat, State Assemblies after negotiations with the state liaison committees and divisional committees according to guidelines made by the supreme council.
- To fulfill all the conditions under the Societies Act 1966.
- To table the annual accounts and annual report to the General Assembly after being approved by the auditors.
- Deliver the annual reports to the divisions with the annual accounts at least seven days before the general assembly.
- To determine the registered status of a member, suspend or expel a member.
- Subject to the approval by the Registrar of Societies , to form liaison committees, divisions and branches and ensure their functions with the ability of suspend or dissolve the liaison bodies, divisions and branches, and/or their committees while identifying the re-formation and/or the election of the committees which were suspended or dissolved.
- With the agreement of at least two-thirds of the supreme council, it can reject all divisional delegates attending the general assembly if the collection of dues does not comply with Clause 25.1 and 25.2.
- To strip the post of any member of the liaison committee, divisional committee and branches for whatever reason.
- Appoint a public official

- To determine the budget, name the appointees to sign cheques to decide on where the funds are allocated.
- To appoint a Public Trustee and to terminate the appointment at any time.
- To set the date for naming of the divisional delegates and to determine which delegates can form the committees.
- To draw up regulations on the formation of election committees along with regulations to implement, monitor and supervise the election committees at all levels and to form other sub-committees.
- Take steps apart from the above to ensure the smooth functioning of the party.
- The Supreme Council has the right to postpone elections at its own level, divisions and branches. The postponement cannot exceed 18 months from the date of the elections that were supposed to have been carried out.

In practice, the most powerful person in UMNO when the general assembly is not in session is the President, who is the head of the supreme council. Clause 9.8.1 gives the discretionary power which are quite wide to the president to be “the main leader and responsible for the smooth operation of the party.” He is also empowered to appoint senior officials. This includes appointing the party secretary-general, treasurer, information chief, chairman and deputy chairman of any state and federal territory liaison committee, and not more than 12 members of the supreme council. These powers of appointing party officials mean that all the workings of the party at the state and national level is at the beck and call of the president. As the president is also the Prime Minister, the incumbent is also able to name political appointees for the highest posts in government at various levels - cabinet, Deputy Minister, Parliamentary Secretary, Political Secretary, Menteri Besar, state executive committee, chairmen of state-owned companies and statutory bodies, even senior officials in the civil service. The President further has the powers to call and chair the supreme council meeting.

The President usually involves the Deputy President in all of these, whether directly or indirectly when managing UMNO. The deputy president gets to assist the president by chairing the UMNO

management committee meetings, more so than any other party official. In short, many issues to be considered by the supreme council, will be scrutinised first by the management committee. The committee proposes the kind of decisions to be taken by the supreme council. The supreme council even looks to the management committee to carefully study matters if necessary. Needless to say, the deputy president, as chairman of the management committee, can influence the agenda of the party and the decisions to be made. If the deputy president has the full confidence of the party, he will be given a more important role.

What ever way one looks at it, Najib's role as deputy president will always be appraised in the context of the power structure and system within UMNO. He will be judged by his ability and efficiency in being the leading assistant to the president to manage the party well, which in turn is linked to his responsibilities in the supreme council whenever the general assembly is not in session. It is clear that although Najib's role is only to support the president, the subtle powers and influence that comes with the deputy president's post is quite substantial. But as a mature politician, Najib will carry out the tasks wisely as the deputy president.

MESSAGE TO THE YOUTH, WANITA AND PUTERI WINGS

Another of the Deputy President's role which is unique is the responsibility of officiating the Youth, Wanita and Puteri meetings during the UMNO General Assembly held simultaneously every year. This is the opportunity for the UMNO stalwart to analyse various issues. Usually, his views will be in line with the President's own opinions. However, the opportunity to address once a year gives the Deputy President a platform to explain his views on government, politics, the economy, society, education and others.

For Najib, the maiden address to the delegates of the three movements of the party occurred on September 21, 2004 as a vice-president carrying out the tasks of the deputy president. He started the speech, titled "*Continuity and Changes*", by reminding the delegates

of the party's slogan - Unity, Loyalty and Service which had earned UMNO the distinction of being the political party in power the longest in the World. He stressed:

“When we unite, our strength will consolidate, when we are loyal, the race becomes respectable, and when we serve, the people acknowledges. The biggest reward to our struggle is when we get support and aid from the people. From the people we come, to the people we contribute. If the mandate is given, that is the trust which we must value.”

To those who have forgotten, Najib reminded them that the Malays have a long history. He has no doubts that the Malays have played a dominant role when the Hindu-Buddhist civilizations held sway; under the glory of the Islamic civilization; during western colonial times; during the struggle for independence, and when the World became uni-polar. He said:

“In all episodes of World history, the Malays have played a major role. This is because the Malays formed the Vijaya empire at Sungai Melaka in Palembang, pioneered the Langkasuka, Majapahit and Gangga Negara kingdoms. It was the Malays who set up the Islamic empire in Melaka. The Malays brought glory to the Melaka Empire, Damak, Aceh, Ligor and Champa. We were also the the front-line in the struggle for independence from the colonial power. The Malays were courageous in rising up to deny the major powers by holding fast to the principles of justice and truth. That's why we could establish a strong base, practice culture, dominate politics, defend the integrity of Islam and become a sovereign race.”

After that Najib sketched a geo-political landscape which had changed and analysed the success of the Malays in several aspects such as the economy, without comparing to the other communities, had achieved much by increasing the holdings while producing more Malay professionals in all sectors. But he stressed that the Malay economic agenda was yet to be completed. To consolidate the gains of

the Malays and raise the status to new heights of glory, Najib outlined eight measures which needed to be implemented.

The first step is to strengthen the economic interests of the Malays and to ensure that UMNO would not shirk from its principles to raise the economic status of the Malays. He even went as far as saying that UMNO wanted to see the spirit, and principles of the New Economic Policy, to be further heightened. The second measure is to practice genuine values by reviving traditional values through the blending of contemporary values to ensure success. Najib said the traits of the Malays such as trust, loyalty, sincerity, patience, moderation, courtesy and family values, needed to be strengthened by having a global, scientific, strategic outlook and culture of high achievement. Najib said:

“We need to change out easy-going attitude to one of earnest, from that of so-so to one of exactness, from superstition to science, and from emotions to rationality, from tactical thought to strategy and so on from disorganised thinking to priority. Only with the blend of these values can we Malays be able to face the global challenges without sacrificing our integrity based on Islam and the Malay culture.”

The third step towards Malay glory which he urged is knowledge empowerment and education. He believed that excellence comes with knowledge and education. A community which is cloaked in ignorance and darkness has no way of appreciating something that is important to them. The fourth measure is to be proficient in foreign languages, which he pointed out, is vital in making the race more competitive, well-informed and more scientific and technology-oriented. The fifth point is for UMNO to go to greater heights is for it to select leaders by merit. He explained:

“If the elected leaders are trustworthy, wise, efficient, honest, sincere and disciplined, than the party will find it easier in the coming years to work and become stronger. But if the party elects leaders not based on such criteria, UMNO will face difficulties in managing itself. Even worse, the image of the party will be

tarnished in the eyes of the public, and eventually UMNO will become weak and its influence diminished.”

Najib also argued that other than merit, UMNO members must be loyal, practice meritocracy and form a society based on Islam Hadhari. In instilling a culture of meritocracy, said Najib, Malays are given the opportunities in accordance with their abilities. He explained:

“Consideration has to be given to those with knowledge, ability and skills, and not based on those whom we are close to.”

On Islam Hadhari, Najib said it is aimed at raising the standard of living, contribute to piety, strengthen belief, clarify knowledge, uphold justice, instil tolerance and bring about a more holistic and balanced development for the good of the race and the nation.

Najib concluded his maiden speech to the Youth, Wanita and Puteri movements with the hopes that they continue to be the backbone of the party, forge ahead with defending the interests of women so that they would be the sanctuary for them. To UMNO Youth, he expressed hope that it take on the responsibilities as the agents of change and the conscience of the people. The Youth movement, he declared, “must reflect the needs of the younger generation. Youth members were urged to show idealism borne of pragmatism while taking on issues that are dear to the hearts of Malays.” To the Puteri wing, he called on it to use their trademark pink hue to attract the attention of the people, especially the adolescent females through projects in education, welfare and social work.

OTHER POLITICAL STATEMENTS AS THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT

As the Deputy President of UMNO, Najib also has leeway to make statements about politics and current issues on general or specific matters pertaining to UMNO, Barisan Nasional and the opposition

parties. The statements often take the form of reactions to issues of policy and government directives. He would also reply to, explain or defend UMNO and its leaders who may be criticised by the opposition. It could even be replies to BN compatriots on certain political issues. The statements usually reflect the stand made by the top leadership of the coalition and UMNO on matters related to government policy, which essentially are UMNO policies. The political narratives are also made to publicly clarify what UMNO stands for so that continued support is assured. So far, in his tenure as deputy president, Najib has made many political statements, especially during the general elections campaign, or during various levels of UMNO conferences. This book will not go into detail on the statements - except when it is vital or prudent to do so as in the case of the deputy president's position in safeguarding the Malay Agenda as enshrined under the UMNO constitution. Most of the accounts had already been mentioned in his maiden address at the opening of the UMNO delegates assembly for the Youth, Wanita and Puteri wings.

Najib's stand in defending the interests of the Malays, as seen when he was Youth leader, seemed to be consistent when he became deputy president. For example, when in July 2004, an opposition party proposed that a non-Malay be given the opportunity to be appointed prime minister and deputy prime minister, Najib firmly pointed out that the formula which had worked well for Malaysia all these years and accepted by all, should not be questioned. He articulated, "The practice has become the culture and a social contract between the multi-racial societies since independence. This is one of the realities. Although not written in the federal constitution, this reflects the reality based on the demographics and politics of Malaysia. He went on to say that:

"It has been agreed to become a contract which is an understanding and practice, even institutionalised....meaning it has become part and parcel of the way we run our country. What is important is tolerance and consensus are carried out between the different races in Malaysia. From there, we can ensure political stability. This stability is the reason Malaysia is successful. The formula cannot be changed as it would place the nation in jeopardy."

Although firm in defending Malay dominance - or what's left of it - Najib acknowledges that the struggle to maintain the integrity of the race cannot survive in a political vacuum. On the contrary, it is being implemented in terms of *realpolitik*. True at one time, historically, the Malay peninsular was a land exclusively of Malays. But after independence, with the consent of UMNO, migrants were accepted as citizens. They have the same rights as the Malays. As Malaysia is a multi-racial nation, Najib - as other responsible leaders - takes a serious view of national unity. He has spoken a lot on strengthening unity. He warns against anyone taking for granted national unity which, he said, "enables us to live in a stable and harmonious nation."

Therefore, when the MCA raised the issue of building more National Type (Chinese) Primary Schools under the 9th Malaysia Plan - a claim that was vehemently opposed by Malays - Najib advised the MCA to discuss the matter with the government behind closed doors. Najib, who is also UMNO Education Bureau head, said it should be studied from several aspects including the ramifications on the national education policy and the implications resulting from the construction of more of such schools. However, he declared that the government would not be making a decision which would be detrimental to the objectives of the national education policy. At the same time, he gave assurances that the government would not want to disappoint any community in the country. He said:

"BN always respects every request submitted by the component parties as long as they are in line with the overall policies and objectives of the nation."



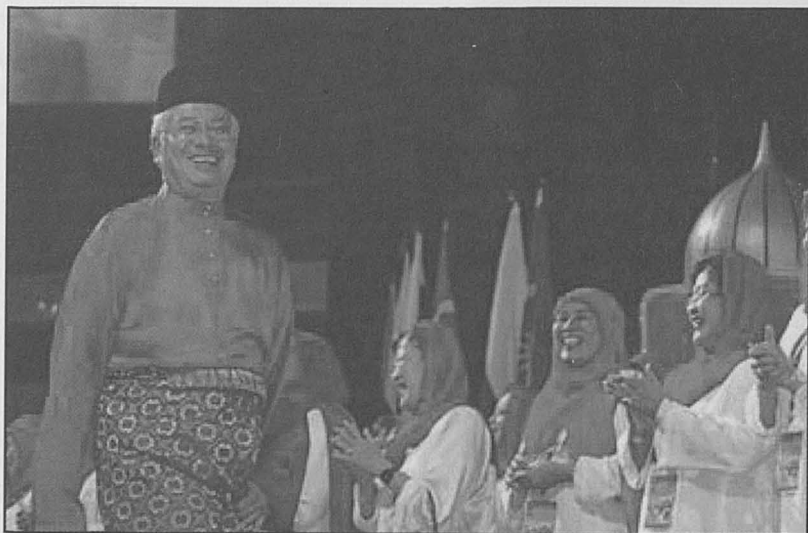
Najib, Abdullah with MCA leaders.



At the raising the flag ceremony at the start of the UMNO General Assembly of 2005.



Officiating the joint General Assembly of the UMNO Youth, Wanita and Puteri in 2005.



Welcomed by the leaders of Wanita UMNO to its meeting.



Najib, Abdullah and other members of the UMNO Supreme Council during the party General Assembly of 2005.



Najib with Abdullah after the former was named as the acting Deputy President of UMNO at the end of 2003.

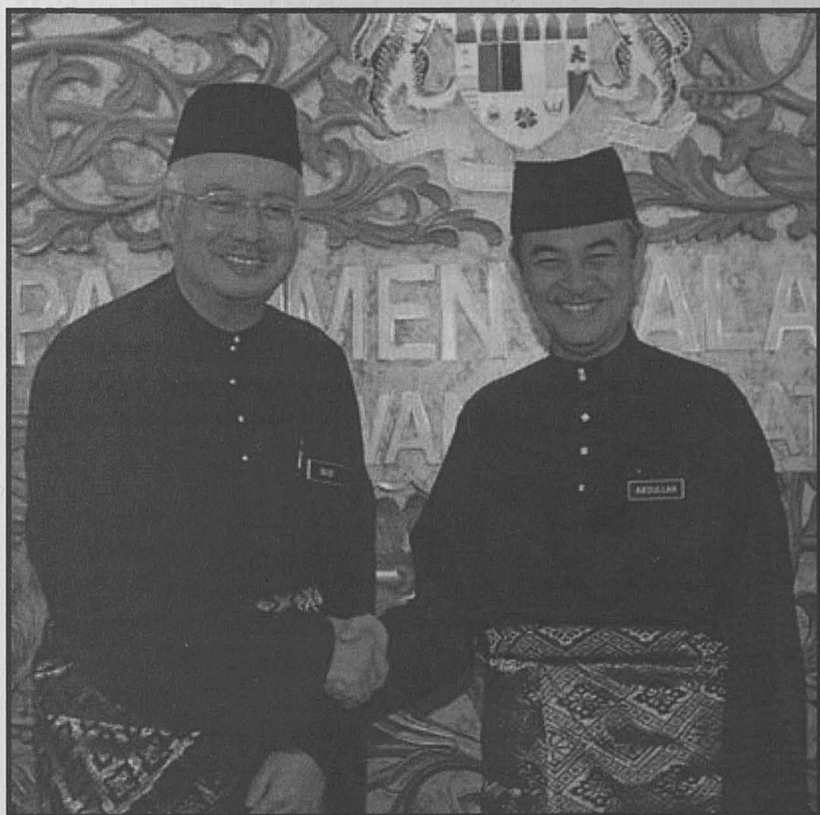


Najib and other members of the UMNO Supreme Council at the one of its meeting in 2005.

NOT GREEDY IN POLITICS

11

THIRTY YEARS AND COUNTING



responsibilities to the best of my ability so that I can assist Yang Di-Pertuan Agong in administering the country's affairs and representing Malaysia in international relations.

THIRTY YEARS AND COUNTING



After 30 years in politics, a lot can be read into Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak's career as a political leader. He is not controversial. He also rose through the party ranks. He had offered himself as a candidate for posts, whether at divisional or national level, only when there was a vacancy and when there was enough popular support. He has also been cautious when arriving at a cross-road or a dilemma. Too cautious, as in the 1987 fractious party elections, when some thought he was a fence-sitter who bided his time until the winner emerged - an accusation he was quick to dismiss. When in a position to do something, he strove to carry out his tasks and responsibilities entrusted to him. He is also not someone who easily succumbs to flattery. Even on the day after he was confirmed by all UMNO divisions to be deputy president, Najib did not get carried away with his supporters in elation and celebration. They assumed that since Najib did not have any challenger, his position in UMNO was stronger than Abdullah who apparently had competition from Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. At the threshold of his highest point of his political career thus far, Najib kept his cool. He did not lose sight of his objectives. When asked to comment, he said his tasks were to ensure that Abdullah continued to get his full support in leading the party.

"I pledge to give full concentration to carry out my duties, responsibilities to the best of my ability so that I can assist Yang Amat Berhormat in administering the party," Najib was quoted as saying by Bernama when reacting to reporters questions in July 19, 2004.

NOT GREEDY IN POLITICS

Najib really isn't someone who is greedy in politics. Right from the start, he rose through the political ranks to the present position. He did not climb over the heads or challenge anyone to get party and government posts as what had occurred with Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who eventually lost out along the way. When he said he placed full trust in Allah in his political fate, he was not making a political statement or rhetoric. It was really backed by his track record of thirty years in politics. He only offered himself to be the UMNO Youth head when there was a vacancy. The vice-head at that time, Mokhtar Hashim had to stand down as he no longer qualified. Najib as the senior most Youth exco saw that his path ahead was clear. Najib did not lobby to become Youth head, but had the position put before him when Anwar set his sights on the Vice-Presidency in 1987. When Anwar went for the Deputy President's post in 1993, again there was a vacancy for Najib and others to go for it.

Although he did stand for election on the Vision Team ticket, it was only a political expediency due to the circumstances at that time. Political observers believed that even if he didn't join the vision team, Najib, who was popular with the grassroots, would have won anyway. The mood among delegates during the assembly was the desire for change. Najib was in the right wavelength and was in tune with the mood. His election as one of the three vice-presidents in 1993 was not based on his association with the vision team. The election was entirely on merit. This he proved in the elections of 1996 and four years later in 2000. Najib's popularity was confirmed in the two elections by winning the top spot, while some of the other members of the vision team did not make the grade. Some lost out in the 1996 elections. The successive wins showed that Najib had the influence of the grassroots - something that no one ever denied. The achievements came not from confrontation, but from the close contacts with the foundation of party supporters after all those years, starting as UMNO Youth exco with the aura of his father Tun Abdul Razak's reputation as the saviour of the Malays.

With his gentle and soft-spoken manner, his approachable personality and lack of arrogance despite his aristocratic lineage, Najib

eventually built a strong base in UMNO and national politics. This is vindicated by his official positions in government as deputy minister, menteri besar and minister. He was known as a high-achiever who impressed everyone. As Youth and Sports Minister, he was seen as taking up a junior position, but he ignored the sniggers. It was the same in the Defence Minister's post after that. Some cynics claimed he was put in cold storage, saying no one could do anything there but to accept salutes from march pasts. He proved the critics wrong. In both ministries, he proved his worth. When he was appointed Education Minister, everyone believed he was promoted. But when he returned to the Defence Ministry, he was then assumed to have been demoted. But he took all of this in stride. Where ever he went, regardless of the perceived seniority of the post, he focused on his tasks. He was not easily provoked, even at the most critical of times. His bearing and personality carried him well in his thirty years in politics.

When he was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and elected UMNO Deputy President, Najib remained his unassuming self. There was no reason for him to be hasty, let alone betray those who had helped him to his present position. He has no desire to bite the hand that feeds him. He repeatedly pointed this out during an interview with *Mingguan Malaysia* several days after his appointment as deputy prime minister. He asked the journalists from *Mingguan* to study his track record in UMNO. Najib proved that in his thirty years in politics, he had always been loyal to his boss. Moreover, time is on his side. He can afford to wait. If after waiting, his fate was not to be the Prime Minister, he would accept it as Allah's will. What is important now is to concentrate on his task of realising the agenda set by Prime Minister Abdullah. Well aware that politics is full of back-stabbers and *agent provocateurs*, Abdullah and Najib had already pledged not to let anyone bring them to logger-heads. Najib on his part swore to be on good and intimate terms with Abdullah.

ABDULLAH THE OPEN-MINDED LEADER

On the first anniversary of Abdullah becoming Prime Minister on October 31st 2004, Najib was asked how good were his ties with

Abdullah as the number two person in the party and government. Najib replied straight from the heart in this way:

“The character of YAB the Prime Minister as an individual has brought us on very good terms to the extent that we are very close and intimate. In all issues, before the Prime Minister made a decision, he sought my counsel and discussed the matter with me although the ultimate decision was his, as the prime minister. At least, I as the deputy played my role in contributing and giving my views so that whatever decision is made, we both can defend it as a shared responsibility in government.”

Najib also acknowledged that Abdullah is an open-minded leader. He explained:

“I see that YAB Prime Minister is open. He would not feel slighted if we gave a different opinion or contrary to what he wants as long as it is in good faith. If the views are reasonable and with foundation, then YAB would consider them if they are better than what he thought earlier.”

Najib is also comfortable with Abdullah's style and he disagrees with those who compare this fifth prime minister with the four predecessors. Najib said:

“I see that every Prime Minister was suited to his own particular era. We are fortunate in that in retrospect, from the first, second, third and fourth prime ministers, every one of them were just right for the times. The concept and style of every prime minister were suited to the times. That is why we have come this far. And God Willing under the leadership of YAB Datuk Seri Abdullah Badawi as the fifth Prime Minister, I am confident that YB will bring the nation to greater excellence.”

ABDULLAH'S SUCCESSOR - OPPORTUNITY AND PURSUANCE

Naturally, after becoming Deputy Prime Minister and UMNO Deputy President, the question often asked is: Will Najib succeed Datuk Seri Abdullah as Prime Minister and UMNO President? Will he follow in the footsteps of his father in reaching the number one spot in administration and politics in Malaysia? If the succession is completed, when will it happen? After the next general elections, which is scheduled in 2009 when Abdullah is seventy and Najib 56? Or after the 2014 general elections after Abdullah completes two terms, when Abdullah turns 75. Najib is 61 in 2014. If Abdullah doesn't step down by then, what will Najib's chances be in succeeding Abdullah. Will there be anyone else to be groomed and guided by Abdullah to become his hand-picked successor.

What about Anwar Ibrahim, who in the near future would not have any legal obstacle in making a political comeback to reach the status he so much desired? Only time will tell. Moreover, delving into such speculations are not relevant and wasteful, if only to satisfy those who wish to see upheaval in UMNO. They wish to see another big confrontation in the party. However the number of such people is relatively small. At least that is what Baharum Mahusin, political analyst for the tabloid *Kosmo* published by the Utusan Group thinks. Baharum says Malays are fed up and wary with all of the party infighting between the number one and number two, such as occurred in 1987 and 1998. Now they want to see a smooth and orderly transition in UMNO from Abdullah to Najib, or to anyone else. If another acrimonious power struggle occurs, UMNO will face a major crisis of confidence among Malays.

Common sense would dictate that Najib is in a strategic position to succeed as the nation's leader one day. But at this moment, the matter doesn't arise. Abdullah who won in a landslide victory in the 2004 general elections is not thinking of calling it quits just yet. So the question of whether Najib succeeding Abdullah does not arise. But as deputy prime minister and deputy party president Najib is seen as just one step away from the top post after Abdullah decides to step down at a time he decides is the right one to do so. When Najib

was appointed as his deputy, there was surely the possibility that Najib would be groomed as his successor. Not now, but during a time when Abdullah decides to be the right one. If the date of transition is decided beforehand, Abdullah would turn into a lame-duck prime minister.

In other words, in current Malaysian politics, Najib is the crown-prince to Abdullah. If Abdullah lets go of his post, Najib as the number two in government and party is the personality who takes his place. The situation was similar with the four prime ministers before Abdullah. Abdullah as the deputy, replaced Dr. Mahathir. Dr. Mahathir as the deputy succeeded Tun Hussein Onn. Hussein with Razak previously. The time comes when leaders arrive and depart. Of course, political analysts point out that not all deputy prime ministers become prime ministers. Tun Dr. Ismail, Tun Musa Hitam, Tun Ghafar Baba and Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim were all deputy prime ministers who did not reach the highest post. Tun Dr. Ismail died of a heart attack in 1974; Musa has a falling out with Dr. Mahathir in 1986; Ghafar was unseated by Anwar in 1993 while Anwar himself was sacked by Dr. Mahathir from government while the party supreme council impeached him from UMNO in 1998.

How will it be for Najib? He personally seemed not to be pre-occupied with the question whether he will be prime minister. Not that he wasn't asked about it from time to time. Many have queried him about it. In an interview with *The Sun*, the newspaper's political editor Zainon Ahmad did the same. Najib gave a terse reply:

"Allah eventually decides whether I will or not. As a human being we only need to discharge our duties sincerely and do Allah's bidding; what is expected of us. I would like to think that whatever we do, Allah will eventually approve of what we do."

That is Najib, the first-born of the second Prime Minister of Malaysia. His beliefs and political philosophy have scarcely changed after thirty years in politics, despite since 2004 having been Deputy Prime Minister and UMNO Deputy President. He only wants to serve to the fullest as sincerely and honestly as possible in whatever capacity given to him, starting with his election to parliament in 1976 until he earns the title of Deputy Prime Minister.

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Indexs

- Abdullah Ahmad, Tan Sri, 50, 96
- Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Datuk Seri, 59, 60, 64, 65, 88, 89,
162-163
- Abdul Ghafar Baba, Tun, 51, 64
- Abdul Rahim Bakar, Datuk, crisis with the palace, 21-23;
Rahim Bakar's choice, 24-25; sacrificial lamb, 26-28
- Abdul Rahman Ismail, Tun, 3
- Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman, Datuk, 20
- Abdul Razak Hitam, 21
- Abdul Razak Hussein, Tun, the death 3-6;
the dutiful PM, 6-12
- Adam Jaafar, 54
- Ahmad Badawi, 7, 36
- Ahmad Fuad, 8
- Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Datuk, 61
- Anuar Zaini, Datuk, 90
- Anwar Ibrahim, 64, 66
- Anwar Jusoh, 14
- Baharum Mahusin, 164
- Barisan Nasional, 11
- Cabinet Committee, 126-126
- Chandra Muzaffar, 56
- China, 11
- Cold War, 11
- Communist Party of Malaya, 12
- DAP, 11
- Deputy Prime Minister, political history, 116-118
- Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Tun, 26-28, 98

Endon Mahmood, Datin Seri, 97
 England, 2
 Felda, 9, 121-126
 Hamzah Abu Samah, 15, 22
 Harun Idris, 59
 Hussein Onn, Tun, 3, 22, 26
 Independence of Malaya Party, 8
 Johari Razak, 4, 5, 13
 Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, 60
 Kalimullah Hassan, Datuk, 96
 Khalid Mohd, Datuk, 63
 Lee Kim Sai, Tan Sri, 50
 Ling Liong Sik, Tun 50
 Malay Administrative Service, 6
 Malay College Kuala Kangsar, 6
 Malay rights, 10
 Mohamad Jusoh, Datuk, 14
 Mohamad Yaacob, Tan Sri, 26
 Mohd. Najib, 2, 3; taking the plunge into politics, 14-18;
 resolving political tensions, 28-31;
 rising through the ranks, 34;
 reviving UMNO Baru's Youth Movement, 39-44;
 key note address to UMNO Youth General Assembly, 45-47;
 almost detained under the ISA, 49-56;
 between Mahathir and Razaleigh, - 1987, 59-63;
 joining the vision team, 64-65;
 between Mahathir and Anwar, 66-67;
 redeeming the narrow victory at Pekan, 67-70;
 heading three ministries – youth and sports, 77-78;
 defence, 79-80; education, 80-81; defence, 82;
 the number two man, 88-101; appointment of DPM
 – reaction and acceptance, 108-114;
 DPM – Najib's pledge, 119-120; sports as national

agenda, 128-130; resolving the problem of squatters, 131;
raising the income of small-holders, 132;
national disaster and relief committee, 133-134;
deputy president of UMNO, duties and roles, 144-154;
not greedy in politics, 161-162; Abdullah the open-minded
leader, 162-165; Abdullah's successor – opportunity
and pursuance, 164-165

Mohd Nazim, 13
Mohd Nazir, 13
Mohd Noah, Tun, 13
Mohd Nizam, 13
Muhammad Muhd. Taib, Tan Sri, 59
Muhyiddin Yassin, Tan Sri, 59
National Economic Action Council, 66
National Operation Council, 9
New Economic Policy, 10
Onn Jaafar, Datuk, 7
Othman Saat, 26
Paridah Abdul Samad, 62
Pekan, 6
Petronas, 2
Pulau Keladi, 6
Raffles College, 6
Radzi Sheikh Ahmad, 60
Rahah, Tun, 12-14
Rahim Tamby Chik, 21
Rahmah Osman, 61
Rais Yatim, 21, 59
Razak Baginda, 79
Rosmah Mansor, Datin Seri, 96
Sanusi Junid, Tan Sri, 59
Sardon Jubir, 7

Shariff Ahmad, Tan Sri, 6
Sultan Ahmad Shah, 15
Tengku Ahmad Rithaudeen, 4
Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, 2, 59
Tunku Abdul Rahman, 7
UMNO, 2
UMNO Youth, 35-39; Razak' era, 35; under Sardon Jubir, 35,
Senu Abdul Rahman, 36-37; Harun Idris' leadership, 7-38;
the era of Jaafar Albar, 38, Suhaimi Kamaruddin, 38,
Anwar Ibrahim, 38-39
United Kingdom Malay Union, 7
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 11
University of Nottingham, 2
Wan Mokhtar Wan Ahmad, Tan Sri, 59
Zainal Abidin Zin, Datuk, 60

