

Najib's workaholic pace inherited from father

MalaysiaKini.com

Jan 13th, 2016

Azman Ujang, Bernama

Since becoming prime minister in 2009, Najib Abdul Razak's pace of work can only be described as punishing because there's so much on his plate as he goes about tackling the nation's woes, especially during this period of weakening world economy.

Observers can't help but liken his workaholic disposition to that of his father, second Prime Minister Abdul Razak Hussein, who died 40 years ago at age 53.

Just on Saturday, Najib underwent minor surgery for a benign growth on his right hand at the Kuala Lumpur Hospital.

The hospital in a statement said Najib went through the operation as an outpatient and had gone home.

While ordinary Malaysian workers might very well have taken medical leave, Malaysians and other well-wishers who were anxious to know of his health got this tweet from him: "I'm recovering well, thank you for the kind thoughts."

His tweet was also directed at his Singapore counterpart Lee Hsien Loong for wishing him a speedy recovery.

Lee broke the news to his 934,996 Facebook likers of Najib's operation by saying he was glad that it went well, adding: "Look forward to seeing him soon."

Both prime ministers enjoy a relationship unique among current world leaders and the outcome of this has been that bilateral as well as people-to-people ties between the two neighbouring nations are on their strongest footing ever.

It's unique because both their fathers, Abdul Razak and Lee Kuan Yew, were also contemporaries as prime ministers in the past.

Singaporeans, in wishing Najib a speedy recovery, also advised him not to worry too much and to concentrate on getting Malaysia onto the right footing while expressing their hopes for relations between the two countries to be strengthened and going forward.

A glowing tribute to Najib came from another Singaporean, Joseph Tan, who wrote: "In my assessment, he is by far the best PM for Malaysia to build on a win-win relationship with her closest neighbour, Singapore.

"May he be able to manage and overcome the intense challenges of his office in the years ahead."

These expressions from our neighbours actually are genuine for they have seen how former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad's unfriendly posture towards Singapore caused relations to be patchy while the Malaysian leader was not one to give Singapore the credit that it deserved.

Outdoor morning meeting

Najib's nose for hard work again showed when on Monday itself, he turned up to address the monthly outdoor morning gathering of ministers, deputy ministers and senior officials of the PM's Department under a scorching sun.

The message was clear - he wants ministers and civil servants to work harder and be more accountable, as the nation faces some of the most challenging times both economically. There is also the security threat posed by the self-styled Daesh militant group.

Najib (photo) is also the prime minister who has visited Sabah and Sarawak the most, not only to the state capitals but to the remote longhouses as well.

Sarawak Chief Minister Adenan Satem described Najib as the most caring prime minister to his state, and by the same token to Sabah.

To get a glimpse of the workaholic pace set by Razak that Najib inherits as the nation observes the 40th anniversary of his passing, Bernama spoke to former senior civil servant Arshad Ayub.

Arshad, now 87, who worked for 10 years under Razak both as the pioneer Director of Institut Teknologi Mara (ITM and now renamed Universiti Teknologi Mara or UiTM), and later as deputy governor of Bank Negara, began the interview by saying: "Razak worked virtually 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year."

Razak's priority

Relevant with Malaysia's fledgling years, Razak's priority then was rural development and poverty eradication, punctuated by his brainchild, the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda), which has since become the most successful such agency in the Third World and highly credited for breaking the backbone of rural poverty.

Felda has since become the world's biggest plantation owner with oil palm cultivation and palm oil production as the mainstay providing steady income to tens of thousands of rural folks who would otherwise have to fend for themselves in meagre subsistence.

Against this backdrop, Felda is something closest to Najib's heart and the welfare of Felda settlers in newly-created towns and growth centres across the country has always been given his personal attention and priority.

Lots of incentives and goodies have come Felda's way since he took over as PM and many

more are in the pipeline in the coming years once the current low price of palm oil recovers.

Arshad, who among a string of degrees also graduated from the then Agriculture College in Serdang, said: "Tell me which pond or lake in the country that Razak did not release fish fry into?"

"Which oil palm tree that he had not seen, which road that he had never visited or which university that he had not built (during his time)?" he said.

Urbanising rural areas

Another of Razak's missions was to urbanise the rural areas and Arshad mentioned townships carved out of jungles such as Penawar and Tenggara in Johor, Jengka in Pahang and Ketengah in Terengganu.

And Razak was a firm believer in giving the bumiputera a firm base in education as one sure way to overcome poverty and getting higher income. For this, he created ITM which is the only higher learning institution having campuses throughout the country.

"For 10 years that I headed ITM and he was premier, not once did he pass negative remarks about ITM or the way I ran it," said Arshad, who is credited as the architect of the success story of this institution now known as UiTM.

Arshad said Razak placed a high premium on professional education which saw the focus on accountancy, insurance, marketing, among others, which other universities did not offer and this enabled the graduates to be highly employable.

But it's his knack for choosing the right people to execute the tasks he had for them that impressed Arshad the most.

"He picked the right leader to run the various agencies because in this way they would work and go all out to make a success of his programmes, not for Razak but for the nation and the rakyat," said Arshad.

Among the names he mentioned were Raja Alias Muhammad Alias Raja Muhammad Ali, who for 35 years headed FELDA and towering personalities like Raja Mohar Badiozaman, Ishak Tadin, Taib Andak and Aziz Yassin.

Non-Malays like Thong Yaw Hong, Chong Hon Nyan, Michael Chen and Rama Iyer also featured prominently in Razak's teams.

"Civil servants entrusted by him were imbued with the absolute sense of responsibility to see through his plans. Our motto then was let's work for him and let's make his programmes a success. Perhaps we were prepared to die for it."

Arshad hoped such spirit would be revived under Najib his son.

"I have very fond memories of Razak. As the Malay proverb says, 'A tiger dies leaving his stripes, a man dies leaving his name'. This is absolutely true of Razak.

"He made such a great impact on all us and the nation for which he worked till his last breath."

- Bernama

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd

Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/326678>