

Razak's 'legacy still alive'

NST- 16/6/2007

■ By Eileen Ng and
Regina Lee
news@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: One is the political son, the other the biological son — and they symbolise the rich legacy left behind by Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Malaysia's second prime minister.

Such is the fitting description of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and his deputy Datuk Seri Najib Razak who are following the footsteps of one of the country's greatest leaders.

Najib, Razak's eldest son, said yesterday Abdullah had drawn much inspiration from Razak to the point of regarding himself as his political son.

He recalled that when Abdullah appointed him deputy prime minister, Abdullah privately told him: "You are his biological son, but I'm his political son."

"This showed the confidence Tun had in both of us who are currently entrusted to lead the country," he said in his speech at the Tun Razak Legacy Towards Nation Development Seminar held at the Sime Darby Convention Centre, here.

Also present were Najib's wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, Umno Youth chief Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, deputy Umno Youth head Khairy Jamaluddin and their wives as well as Razak's family.

Razak was appointed the country's second prime minis-

ter on Sept 22, 1970 following the resignation of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj.

Among others, he was instrumental in introducing the New Economic Policy (NEP), aimed at elevating the livelihood of the Bumiputeras.

He was married to Tun Rahah Mohd Noah and they had five sons. He died aged 54 on Jan 14, 1976 in London of leukaemia.

Towards the end of the speech, which touched on Razak's private and professional life, Najib was overcome by emotion when he talked about his father's last years.

He held back his tears as he recounted that his father knew since 1969 he was suffering from leukaemia, but kept it a secret from his wife and children until the end.

"Allahyarham Tun was chasing after time. He did not want his health to be an impediment. He put aside self-interest and sacrificed himself to build the nation.

"He had been advised by close friends and parliamentarians to take a break when they saw how ill he was, but he answered 'how can I rest when there is a lot of work yet to be done', he said in a wavering voice.

Najib said his father played an important role in motivating him to work hard for the country.

"He is my main motivation to work hard for the rakyat. The motivation to continue with his selfless service to en-

sure both the people and the country can be developed."

He also said that a quote by his father at the launch of the MCA general assembly in 1975 also spurred him.

The quote, "Leaders must always be with the people. If not, we would not know what are the needs and aspirations of the rakyat", subconsciously motivated Najib to follow his father's working patterns and dedication.

"There's much we need to do for the people and nation, while the time to do it is short."

Najib said Razak's legacy was alive and remained relevant in this day and age. This was proven as the NEP spirit is still part of the Ninth Malaysia Plan, and under the National Mission, the government is still committed to eradicating poverty, stimulating the economy, addressing the imbalance between the races and raising the quality of life.

"He was ahead of his time in terms of nation-building and racial harmony."

Najib said Razak's leadership potential was already apparent in school. In 1938, the headmaster of the Malay College Kuala Kangsar, C. Bazell, wrote in his report card: "He has considerable initiative and can always be relied on. I expect him to do well later."

As the education minister and prime minister, Razak placed great emphasis on education as he believed it to be the most important investment that a family and coun-

try could make.

Besides having a common touch and making time for the masses, Najib said Razak was also hardworking and this was shown when in 1962, he travelled 43,000 miles (about 68,800km) via roads, planes, helicopters, boats, bicycles and on foot to visit 45 state operation rooms and 118 district operation rooms nationwide.

"Tun possessed transformational leadership qualities and changed the socio-economic-political landscape of this country.

"With his trademark bush jacket and *tongkat* (cane), he was the prime mover of government machinery to ensure the country's development proceeded smoothly."

He ended his emotional speech with a poem entitled *Warisan Wawasan Negara*, which summarised Razak's legacy and struggle.

Later when a short video on Razak's life was played, Najib was seen surreptitiously wiping back his tears.

Hishammuddin, who is Razak's nephew, was also seen to hold back his emotions as he viewed the footage of his late uncle in action.

"It has been 31 years since his death. A lot of the youngsters now were not born yet to have the privilege of seeing him live.

"As such, Khairy and I feel that now is the right time to remind the younger generation of his legacy, and hopefully, to be inspired by him," he said in paying tribute to Razak.

Hishammuddin called on everyone to take a leaf from Razak's book on the importance of loyalty.

"Learn from Tun why loyalty is important to Umno, learn how he invited (former prime minister) Tun Dr Mahathir (Mohamad) back to the party after he was expelled, and learn how and why he went around the country on bicycles and trishaws," he said.

Khairy admitted he did not know much of Razak during his younger days as he was born four days before Abdul Razak died.

"The first time I heard his name was when my mother recalled how my father openly wept when he first received the news of his death. From then, I wondered what was so great and special about this person that inspired my father to this extent.

"Now that I know and understand his greatness and legacy, I hope the young ones will learn of him and also be inspired," he said.

He said although Najib was the one who introduced the term "glokal", it was already practised by Razak decades earlier.

Before Khairy ended his speech, he quoted Isaac Newton.

"Newton once said, 'If I could see further, it is by standing on the shoulder of giants'. I aspire for the new generation to see further by standing on the shoulder of the great Tun Abdul Razak."