

A leader ahead of his time

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KUALA LUMPUR: When the late Tun Abdul Razak Hussein first drafted the New Economic Policy (NEP), he did not just have economic restructuring and eradication of poverty in mind.

"The coffee shop talk is usually only about the 30 per cent Bumiputera equity, which is not the whole truth. There were actually seven thrusts to the policy as conceived by the original founders," said Dr Rais Saniman, who served on the Umno supreme council with the former prime minister.

They were: Maximum economic growth; economic restructuring to reduce economic imbalances in terms of income, wealth and employment; reducing poverty irrespective of race; full employment of the labour force; interventionist and proactive government; monitoring of the implementation of the policy; and social policy for conflict avoidance.

"In actuality, it was the non-Bumiputeras who gained more from the NEP. Before the NEP, the foreign sector controlled 60 per cent of the share equity.

"Now, the Chinese capital has replaced the foreign capital by controlling 50 per cent of the equity, while about 20 per cent belongs to Bumiputera shareholders," Rais said on the second day of the "Tun Abdul Razak Legacy Towards Nation Development" seminar yesterday.

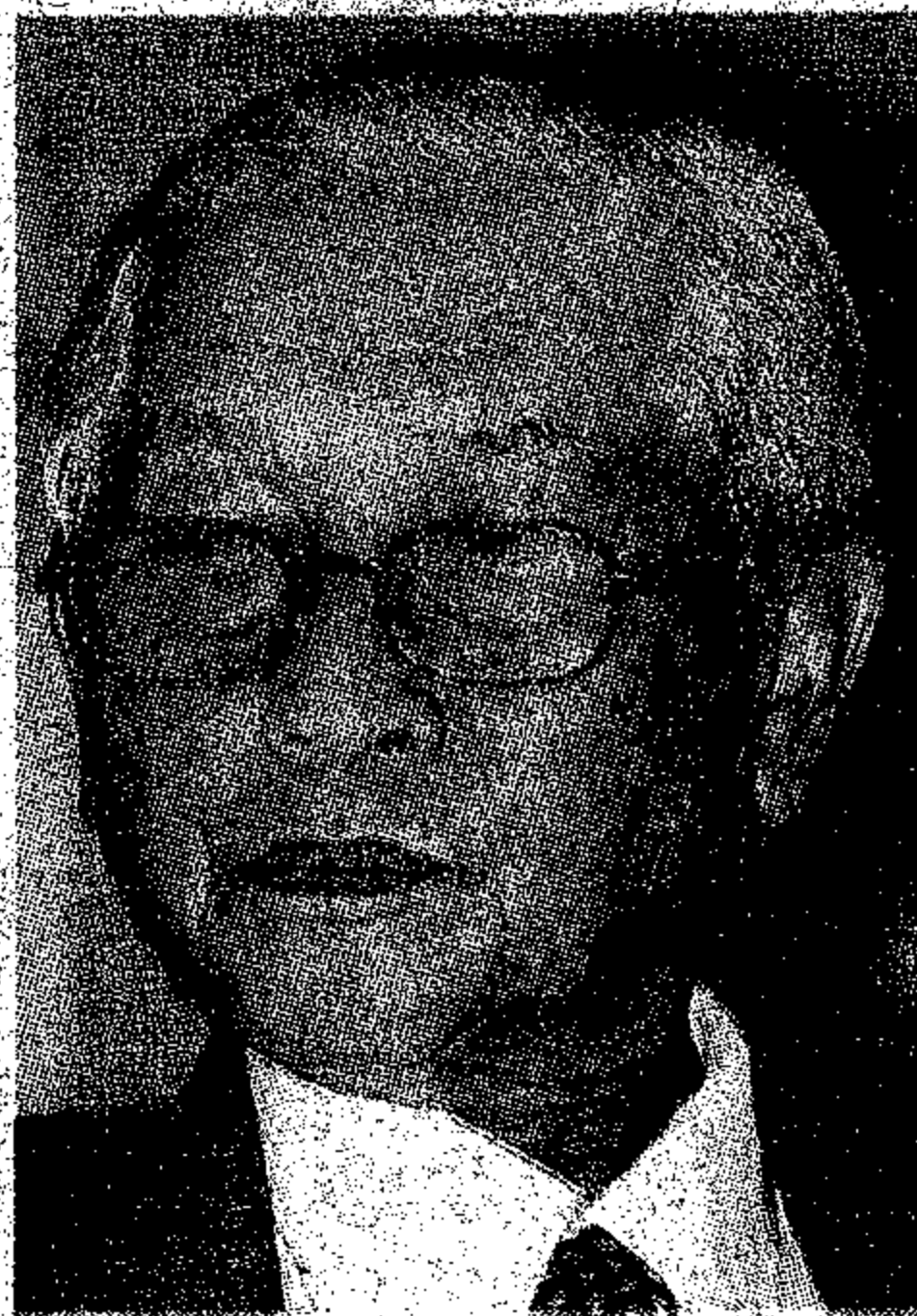
He said Razak was a leader 40 years ahead of his time, having the foresight to see what might plague the country in the future without preventive measures like the NEP.

"I went to Brazil a few years ago with (former deputy prime minister) Tun Musa Hitam. We were entertained lavishly and stayed at posh places. But I realised that the walls of my host's home were more than three metres high. And he had to be escorted by armed



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Dr Rais Saniman



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*Tan Sri Dr Abdul Aziz
Abdul Rahman*



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Dr Paridah Abdul Samad



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*Datuk Seri Mohamed
Jawhar Hassan*

guards every time he went out so that he wouldn't be mobbed by the poor people.

"Razak realised there might come a time when something similar would happen here. So, he travelled widely, devising a policy to solve the problem."

Tan Sri Dr Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman, who worked with Razak on the National Operations Council that was formed after the May 13, 1969 riots, also remembers him as a hands-on leader.

"During meetings, we would

be telling each other our problems. Razak would tell us, 'Don't just talk about the problems. I already know the problems. Tell me how to solve them'," Aziz said.

He revealed the no-nonsense leader's intolerance for corruption.

"He revised the corruption laws. We already had corruption laws but he wanted to reinforce them. He knew all his plans and policies would fail if the leaders were corrupt.

"I was ordered to telephone the then Anti-Corruption

Agency director Tan Sri Harun Hashim immediately after the Yang di-Pertuan Agong signed the act into law. On that day itself, several arrests were made," he said, with a knowing twinkle.

To Universiti Teknologi Mara former lecturer and academician Dr Paridah Abdul Samad and Institute of Strategic and International Studies (Isis) Malaysia chairman and chief executive officer Datuk Seri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Razak was not only a great leader but also

a diplomat extraordinaire, pivotal in securing Malaysia's position in the international arena, post-Tunku Abdul Rahman era.

"When Razak became the prime minister, Malaysia moved away from a pro-Western stand to a new role of non-alignment to secure long-term security.

"He also established diplomatic and political contacts with communist nations such as North Korea in Asia and Soviet Union in Europe, which climaxed with the establish-

ment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China."

Paridah, who wrote a book on Tun Razak, said he also expanded contacts with the Arab states and maintained cordial relations with Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

These two states were fundamentally different in ideological commitment and political system and it was no small feat for a prime minister, whose country had just been liberated after 450 years of colonisation.

"But his most significant foreign policy achievement is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Asean stabilised relations among member countries, preventing hostility and violent disputes, and solving conflicts."

She said through Asean, important declarations and treaties were signed. Examples include Abdul Razak's brainchild, the 1971 Kuala Lumpur Summit Declaration on the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (Zopfan).

She added that for him then, it was important for Southeast Asian countries to focus on development and not spend money, time and energy on stockpiling arms and defence strategies.

Mohamed Jawhar said Razak left five foreign policy legacies: Resolving confrontation with Indonesia; establishing Asean; moving from pro-West to non-alignment; forming Zopfan; and establishing diplomatic relations with China.

He said it was important to note that all of Razak's achievements, both local and international, took place over a short time.

"He was prime minister for five years, three months and three weeks, but he has left a huge legacy.

"Tun Razak was not only a visionary but he could also execute his plans well. Under him, Malaysia emerged from an anti-communist mentality to a foreign policy that was more pragmatic and relevant to current developments," he said.