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Tunku reluctant politician, says son

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KUALA LUMPUR: When Datuk Tunku Ahmad Nerang took the stage at the launch of a book commemorating his father Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, many thought they were looking at the Tunku himself.

Despite the stares, Tunku Ahmad Nerang comfortably delivered his address among family and his father's friends at Carcosa Seri Negara yesterday.

The Raja of Perlis Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail officiated at the launch of *Prince Among Men: Recollections & Reflections on Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra*. Present were the Raja Perempuan Tuanku Fauziah Tengku Abdul Rashid and Culture, Arts and Heritage Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim.

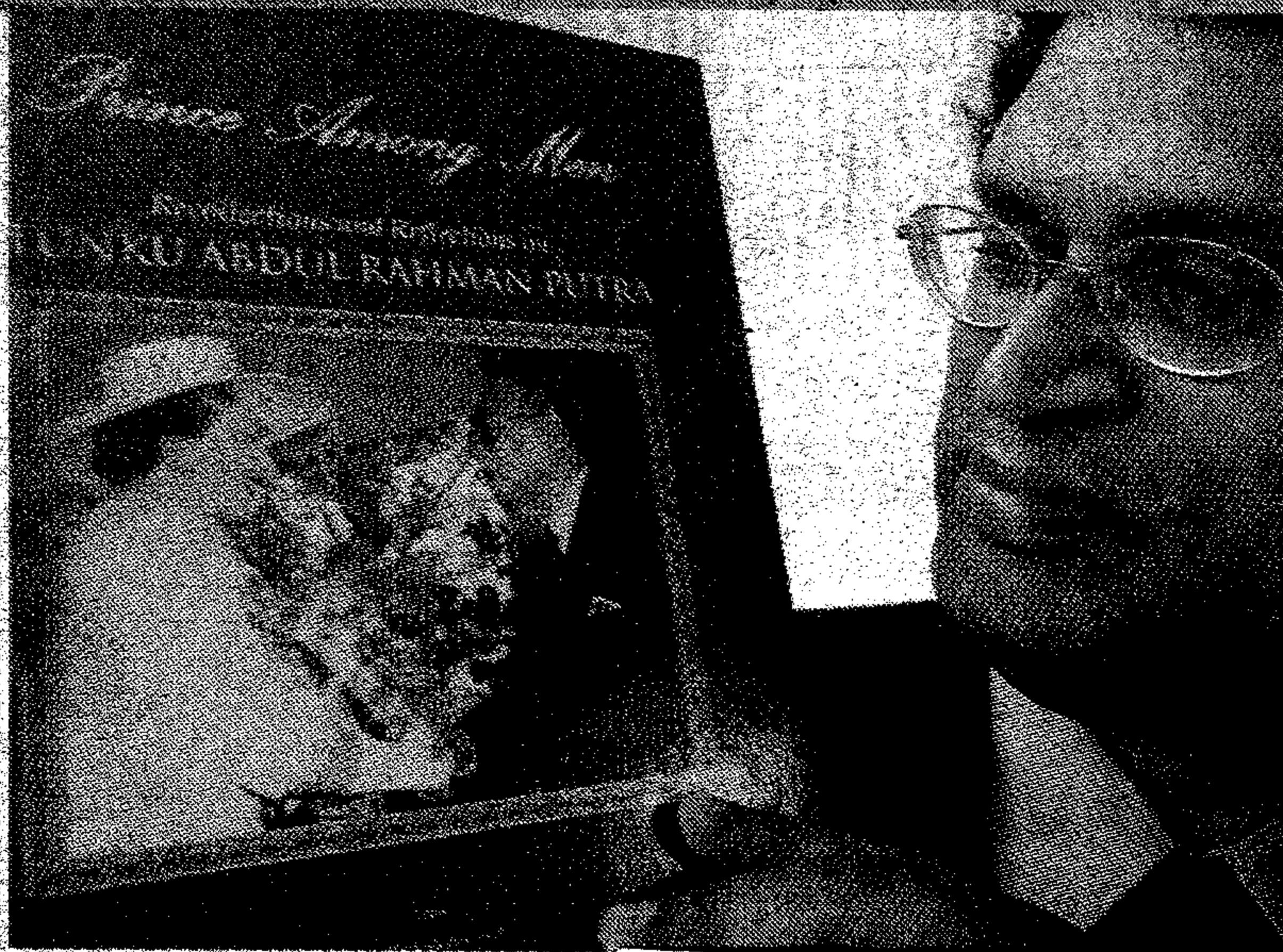
"Tunku was not a politician in the actual sense of the word. He was a statesman and 'Father of the Nation' and his beliefs transcend the limitation of party politics," Tunku Ahmad Nerang said, adding that his father was dragged into politics against his wishes.

Relating the struggle after Datuk Onn Jaafar's resignation from the Umno presidency in 1950, he said his father set one condition before taking on the position.

"I remember him telling (*Utusan Melayu* journalist) Tan Sri Melan (Abdullah) 'I will take over from Onn on the condition that all Umno members consolidate behind me to achieve full independence'."

He said his father, then a Selangor DPP, was attending a case in Alor Star when he heard the voice of his father calling his family name 'Kuta' in court.

"Tunku returned to Istana Pelamin in Alor Star and straight to his father's room. He sat on his father's rattan rocking chair and while he rested, he



Prabakharan S. Nair, editor of the book, poses with the front cover.

dreamt his father said 'Putra, bela ayah (Putra, defend your father)'.

"Tunku was a reluctant politician and he himself said 'I am Father of the Nation'. We have to resolve to follow the values reflected in his life," Tunku Ahmad Nerang said.

Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin also took on an informal personality in his address and made the audience laugh while relating experiences with the Tunku whom he called 'Tok'.

Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin referred to the book as unique as "biographies usually have only one author but this has many authors" and said "history was recorded with much details and the author's experiences were unbiased in all the articles".

The book, an effort initiated by Tunku's niece Tunku Datuk Dr Sofiah Md Jewa, has a collection of articles, interviews and letters from 50 contributors and 11 interviews with family members, including the Tunku's children and grandchildren.