

Newspaper	New Straits Times
Date	9/3/2011

EXCERPTS

On the death of Tun Razak, whom he considered his mentor and protector:

"For me it was devastating, a personal tragedy. The public was shocked by the news of his death, as few people knew how seriously ill he had been. Even most of Tun Razak's political colleagues had not been aware of the true state of his health. Ministers and senior government officials gathered at the Subang International Airport when his body was brought back home one evening a few days later.

"Many in the crowd were crying. I myself could not stop my tears from flowing as I watched the casket being lowered from the aircraft. For a long time after, I would feel a tightness in my chest every time I talked about him.

"I remember that the newspapers described the public's reaction as 'an outpouring of grief'. That sums up how many of us felt.



Tun Abdul Razak, my mentor

"Without him, undeniably, my future in politics seemed less bright. I had lost my protector."

On his letter to Tunku Abdul Rahman about race riots:

"On hindsight, I was unforgiving and deliberately provocative in my letter. I could have been milder, but I wanted to hurt the Tunku, to shock him into realising all that he had been avoiding. I wanted him to know that he was the cause of all our nation's troubles. I now regret the harsh tone very much."

On foreign policy:

"When I took over I decided to review and change our foreign policy. I felt we should ignore ideological differences and be friendly with everyone. My first priority was building stronger relationships with the member countries of Asean as they were our close neighbours, and whatever happened to them would affect us.

"In any case, Asean was formed not as an economic community like the European Union, but in order to avoid conflicts between neighbours,

such as when Indonesia launched its Confrontation against Malaysia and the Philippines claimed Sabah.

"I was determined that conflicts between Malaysia and her neighbours should be avoided through good relations with Asean countries. At a time when national sentiment in Malaysia ran strongly in the opposite direction, I even sought to establish good relations with Singapore after it separated from Malaysia."

On Vision 2020:

"One of the major difficulties in achieving Vision 2020 has always been getting people to understand the idea of Bangsa Malaysia. But Bangsa Malaysia is not a difficult concept to grasp. When I introduced it in 1991, I was confident that by 2020, we would have achieved a common identity.

"Bangsa Malaysia basically means that people should regard themselves, first and above all, as Malaysians. As citizens you must

identify with your country and to that extent, you cannot be totally Chinese or wholly Indian and still be a Malaysian.

"Even the Malays will have to lose some of their Malayness. In time, there will be one common identity in our country and it will be a Malaysian identity, but for a long time, there will still be a number of different ways of being Malaysian. The Malaysian identity will be inclusive enough to recognise and encompass all these differences."

On Ops Lalang:

"Shortly after the split in Umno, I experienced one of the lowest points in my career when the police arrested and detained more than 100 people under the Internal Security Act. The police swoop, called Operasi Lalang (also known as Ops Lalang, roughly translated as Operation Weeding) began in late October of 1987 and would prove to be a permanent blot on my time in office."