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An admired leader and able statesman

He soon found that the art of politics was second nature to him, although the late Razak always indicated that he had wanted his eldest son to become an accountant.

"He wanted me to be an accountant, to be like the late Raslan (Mohamed Raslan Abdullah was accountant-general and the first chairman of Bank Bumiputra. He died in a car crash in 1971).

"At that time, he was very much into creating a new generation of Bumiputera entrepreneurs and technocrats and was anxious for me to join the ranks of corporate leaders.

"That's what he had in mind for me. He didn't encourage me to enter politics."

Within a short period of time, the young Najib found his political

feet and began to show that he was a credible and capable politician and leader in his own right.

Najib's political journey is somewhat similar to that of his father's.

Razak was menteri besar of Pahang from 1955 to 56, Najib became menteri besar of the state from 1982 to 86; Razak was Education Minister from 1956 to 57. Najib held the same portfolio between 1995 and 99; Razak was defence minister from 1957 to 1959, Najib assumed that portfolio from 1990 to 95, and held the post again in 1999 to 2004.

Both father and son served as Umno Youth leader. Later, Razak became deputy president of Umno and deputy prime minister, likewise Najib became the party's deputy president and deputy prime minister.

His father became prime minister and Umno president in 1970 while Najib took over with effect this month.

Najib had also served as deputy energy telecommunications and posts minister from 1978 to 1980, deputy education minister (1980-1981), deputy finance minister (1981 - 1982) and culture, youth and sports minister (later renamed youth and sports minister).

Arguably, Najib's first real test was in 1982 when the then prime minister Datuk Seri (now Tun) Dr Mahathir Mohamad named him as a candidate to contest the Pekan state seat to enable him to become the Pahang menteri besar.

He became the menteri besar at the age of 29.

In the four years he led Pahang, Najib ensured the unity of Pahang Umno while focusing on developing the country's third

largest state.

He had, among other things, embarked on measures to strengthen education in the state, playing an instrumental role in establishing Yayasan Pahang in 1982, a foundation dedicated to promote the development of education and sports among the youth by way of scholarships and funding.

He strengthened state enterprises to maximise earnings from Pahang's abundant natural resources and in cooperation with the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda), he paved the way for the establishment of new land settlement schemes, thus providing new income opportunities for those who were landless and in the lower income group.

On the administrative front, Najib's stint as menteri besar ended in 1986 when he was

appointed as culture, youth and sports minister after once again being returned as the member of parliament for Pekan in the general election held that same year.

The appointment was considered by many to be ideal, as Najib was himself a young person and was therefore believed to be able to relate to youths and their aspirations and needs.

It also fit in very well with his position as a Youth leader in Umno. Najib immediately embarked on improving Malaysian sports, among other things introducing the National Sports Policy in 1988, which outlined the development of sports in the country and the introduction of monetary incentives for athletes who excelled at international tournaments.

Significantly, it was during this time that Malaysia achieved its best-ever performance at the Southeast Asia (SEA) Games held in Kuala Lumpur in 1989.



Datuk Seri Najib Razak is reminded of the good old days as he checks out a picture of his mother at the 'Road to Nationhood: Unity Amidst Diversity' exhibition. With him are former NSTP chief executive officer Datuk Syed Faisal Albar and BRDB chairman Datuk Mohd Moiz (left).

“ POSITIONS IN THE PARTY ARE MERELY RESPONSIBILITIES TO CARRY OUT OUR DUTIES. WHEN UMNO MEMBERS PORTRAY AN IMAGE OF THEM ENSLAVING THEMSELVES TO THE PEOPLE, I AM CONFIDENT IT WILL HELP STRENGTHEN UMNO AND REVIVE THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE IN THE PARTY AND ITS LEADERS. ”

— ON STEPS TO BE TAKEN BY UMNO TO WIN BACK THE PEOPLE'S SUPPORT