



PERDANA LIBRARY
 PERDANA LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION
 NEWSPAPER CLIPPING

Newspaper	New Straits Times
Date	3/4/2011

Destined for greatness

• By Arman Ahmad

DATUK Seri Najib Razak's appointments as the country's sixth prime minister and Umno president cap a sterling political career spanning more than three decades.

For many people, the fact that the son of the country's second prime minister now holds the highest political post in the country is something that is natural and expected.

Najib becoming the prime minister is not the question of if, but when. After all, early on in his career as a politician, Najib had already set a number of records — right from the moment he became the country's youngest member of Parliament at just 22.

He began his early education at St John's Institution, Kuala Lumpur, and later at Malvern Boy's College in Worcestershire, England. He later completed his tertiary education in England, obtaining a degree in Industrial Economics from Nottingham University.

He returned to Malaysia in 1970 and later joined Petronas as its manager of public affairs in 1974.

But as fate would have it, Najib was inadvertently put on a political journey that culminate with his assuming the prime minister's post.

It started on Jan 14, 1976,

when his father Tun Abdul Razak Hussein passed away.

Even as the nation mourned the passing of a statesman, the Umno division of Razak's constituency in Pekan was already seeking a successor.

Najib had already assumed the title "Orang Kaya Indera Shahbandar" of Pahang, a hereditary royal title passed down from generations.

Soon, grassroots sentiments and also the entire nation drove the division to announce that Razak's eldest son Najib would contest in the by-election to fill up the vacancy created by the demise of his father.

On Feb 21, 1976, Najib created history when he won the Pekan seat uncontested, which at the age of 22, made him the youngest member of Parliament in Malaysian history.

Polite, articulate yet soft-spoken, Najib soon endeared himself with the public, and despite his young age, he was well accepted by everyone.

Though he was no stranger to politics, having seen his father working in office as prime minister, Najib, who did not plan to join politics so early in his life, once admitted to how difficult it was to live up to people's expectations.

On his entry into politics, Najib, recalling that his father had wanted him to be an accountant, said he felt like he was thrown into the "deep end of the pool".

"It was a shock having to stand on one's own feet. My first year was a great learning process and it also sped up my maturity," he was quoted as saying.

But despite adversities, Razak's eldest son is a survivor. His fierce determination and drive to succeed



Datuk Seri Najib Razak, flanked by Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib (left) and Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, celebrating after winning the Umno vice-president posts.

soon saw him rising up the ranks, and earning the respect of fellow politicians.

"Since I was young, I had always come up against innuendos because of my father's position. I don't waste my energy trying to disprove them. What I do is to put in every effort to ensure that I can do the job and deliver the goods. Perhaps this is a subconscious way of reacting towards those innuendos," he had said in an interview.

In 1981, at the age of 28, Najib gained the distinction of being the youngest member of the Umno Supreme Council.

A year later, newly-elected prime minister Datuk Seri (now Tun) Dr Mahathir Mohamad sent him to Pahang to contest the state seat of Pekan, which he won.

He was then made Pahang menteri besar, the youngest to occupy the post. As head of the state, he was Pahang Barisan Nasional chairman in 1986 and the state Umno liaison chairman between 1983 and 1988.

In the four years he led the state, the focus was on developing Pahang. Najib strengthened education by setting up Yayasan Pahang, a foundation providing scholarships for students.

He also streamlined state enterprises to maximise earnings from the state's abundant natural resources. In cooperation with Felda, he established new land schemes to provide income for the poor.

Najib's ascension in Umno started with the Youth wing, and his youth meant he could relate better with young people and their aspirations.

He served as Pekan Umno Youth chief between 1976 and 1980 and

executive council member at the national level between 1978 and 1986.

In 1986, Najib rose to become the movement's deputy chief and then its acting head a year later.

His love and affection for the movement culminated with his election as its head in 1988, a post he held for five years until 1993 when he "graduated" to the next level as vice-president.

Najib served more than 10 years as vice-president, helping to build and strengthen the party.

At the division level, he became the Pekan division chief in 1982, a post he has held until today.

After Dr Mahathir handed over the Umno presidency to Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Najib was elected deputy president.

Najib's political career received a jolt in the 1999 general election when he barely scraped through with a majority of 241 votes for the Pekan seat.

It was a shock since he had always won with a majority of 10,000 votes or more. But issues at that time, especially over the sacking of deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, swayed voters' sentiments towards the opposition.

The setback did not dampen his spirit but saw him working extra hard to win back the lost support. It paid off when in the 2004 general election, Najib, who was then deputy prime minister, won with a whopping 22,292-vote majority, one of the highest ever. In the general election last year, the majority increased to 26,464 votes.

Najib's rise to the top has been sure and steady throughout the years. And from a young age, he had already shown great leadership capabilities.

In a 1984 interview with *Asiaweek*, an Umno supreme council member had this to say about him: "He is bright, sober, straight-thinking, very mature for his age. If he bides his time, he can go far."

Najib himself added: "Politics is a marathon. You have to pace yourself."

“ WE MUST ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT THIS GENERATION MAY NOT BE ABLE TO RELATE TO THE PAST STRUGGLES OF OUR PARTY. THIS IS NOT TO SUGGEST THAT THE STRUGGLES OF THE PAST ARE THEREFORE NO LONGER IMPORTANT. BUT IT DEMANDS THAT WE ONCE AGAIN ASSUME THE ROLE OF LEADERS OF CHANGE IN OUR EFFORT TO FULFIL ASPIRATIONS. ”

— SPEAKING AT THE JOINT OPENING OF THE 2009 UMNO YOUTH, WANITA AND PUTERI DELEGATES' CONFERENCES.

UDA HOLDINGS BERHAD
 (947508-T)

