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'Ghafar stood for loyalty, devotion and sincerity'

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10 YEARS ON: He is a symbol of Umno's struggles, says Najib

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THE late Umno deputy president Tun Abdul Ghafar Baba was fiercely loyal to the party, even when he did not hold a top position in the party or government, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said.

Najib, who is also Umno president, paid tribute to the man he referred to as a symbol of Umno's struggles.

Referring to him as "Encik Ghafar" — which was how Ghafar preferred to be called, in spite of his numerous titles — Najib said the former deputy prime minister was among the Umno greats.

"Encik Ghafar never got angry, and he never sulked, even when he was not appointed deputy prime minister. That was not the platform for his struggles.

"He once said that 'positions were not important, but Umno was everything. So take care of it (Umno)'.

"These are values that the current generation must learn from. These are values that are hard to find, and they must be emulated by the current generation. These values must

be embraced in our hearts and souls," Najib said in his speech after a *tahlil* held in conjunction with the 10th anniversary of Ghafar's death at the Tun Ghafar Baba Memorial in Bukit Peringgit here.

About 500 people, including Umno veterans and contemporaries of Ghafar, were present. The *tahlil* was held in the compound of the memorial, a museum which was once the house where Ghafar lived.

Ghafar died on April 23, 2006, of a heart and lung ailment. He was laid to rest in the Warrior's Mausoleum at Masjid Negara, Kuala Lumpur.

Najib said yesterday's gathering of Umno veterans reflected their deep admiration of Ghafar's leadership values, such as loyalty, devotion and sincerity.

"I ask myself, which of Encik Ghafar's values could be emulated by the current generation?

"There are three values; his loyalty to the leader, devotion to the party and his sincerity in upholding Umno's image, principles and struggles.

"Loyalty, devotion and sincerity. That was what Encik Ghafar was to Umno and for all of us," said Najib.

He said Ghafar's contributions reflected Umno's own history as the



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak with (from left) Tun Abdul Ghafar Baba's son, Mohd Tamrin Abdul Ghafar, Dewan Negara president Tan Sri Abu Zahar Ujang, Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Seri Idris Haron, Gua Musang member of parliament Tan Sri Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, Malacca Yang Di-Pertua Negeri Tun Mohd Khalil Yaakob, former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and former deputy prime minister Tun Musa Hitam at the Tun Ghafar Baba Memorial in Bukit Peringgit yesterday. Pic by Rasul Azli Samad



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is greeted by Tan Sri Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah as Tan Sri Abu Zahar Ujang looks on. Pic by Khairunisah Lokman

latter's involvement in nation-building began before Umno was formed.

"I chose to attend this *tahlil* not as an Umno president or prime minister. I am here because of Encik Ghafar Baba... because he cannot be separated from Umno's struggles or from my family, my late father or myself."

Najib said the gathering of veterans yesterday served as a reminder for Umno members to con-

tinue the struggle of past leaders.

"They wanted us to continue defending Umno, and not to leave Umno.

"Without Umno, everything is buried as Encik Ghafar said. Without Umno, there is no Barisan (National) and everything will be in ruins."

Najib said Umno must close ranks despite a difference of opinion.

As an example, he cited Ghafar's son, Mohd Tamrin, who joined Pas

for two years but left in 2014 to return to Umno's fold.

"If there is a difference of opinion, look for ways to cooperate and consolidate. In Umno, we become united in the end. A difference of opinion is not a problem. That is why I accepted Tamrin into my home.

"Having a difference of opinion is fine but we reunited because our fathers were close, and so their children must continue the struggle."

Najib said his late father, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, placed Ghafar in high regard and often described him as "a person most wise when it comes to politics".

"Among the best decisions made by my late father was to appoint Encik Ghafar as acting prime minister at one time. That was a decision that gave my father the most satisfaction.

"His struggle in Umno must be a guideline for all of us. His politics at the grassroots level was par excellence. He was a man of the people, and his story is one we can emulate," Najib said.

He said while this year marked 10 years since Ghafar's passing, it was also significant for being the 40th year since his father's death and 70 years since Umno's formation.

