

Newspaper	New Straits Times
Date	24/08/2017C

FIRM LEADER

'I'M PRIVILEGED TO HAVE KNOWN HIM'

Tun Razak was a good judge of character and he understood poverty, says Tunku Shahrman

FAUZIAH ISMAIL
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

TAN Sri Tunku Shahrman Tunku Sulaiman was a 27-year-old assistant district officer in Triang (now Bera), Temerloh, Pahang, when he first met second prime minister Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, who was the member of parliament for Temerloh, and later Pekan. This was in 1959.

A few months after the first meeting, he was transferred to Rompin. Back then, Rompin was under the Pekan constituency.

"I would follow Razak on his visits to villages. He would sit on the floor and eat with the villagers. He felt like he was one of the *kompong* people."

"Although his father was the district officer of Bentong, Razak lived with his grandfather. He spent the weekends looking after his grandfather's buffaloes, for which he was paid two sen."

"He told me he went to school barefooted because some of his schoolmates didn't have shoes."

"So, he understood poverty." Tunku Shahrman, now 85, had great admiration for Razak for the way he worked and how firm he was.

The second prime minister had no qualms transferring inefficient people. Nobody who worked under him could *curi nyalang* (slack off) at work.

"When I was the assistant district officer of Rompin, there was no road from Endau to Kuala Rompin. There was a grant to build a road and the engineer in charge was an expatriate."

"He was a drunkard. He didn't do the work he was supposed to do. Then, we got a 24-hour notice of Razak's visit. I saw the engineer sweating profusely, pacing up and down the road. Razak came and saw the limited work that had been done."

"He gave the *orang putih* a 24-hour notice of transfer. He (the engineer) did not even have time to say goodbye to me."

Another example Tunku Shahrman gave of Razak's integrity was when he (Tunku Shahrman) was the director-general of the

NST- 24/8/2017 13:14
توفيقاً لله تعالى

TUN RAZAK FOUNDATION

Implementation, Coordination and Evaluation Unit, reporting directly to the prime minister.

"There was a proposal for a business joint-venture, which the chief executive officer of a government company gave to his own family's company. I told Razak about it."

"He told me: 'Shahrman, this man (the CEO) is my friend. You must take action. Go to Dr Ismail (deputy prime minister Tun Dr Ismail Abdul Rahman). Ask him.'"

"I went to see Ismail and told him about it. Ismail's reply was simple: He said: 'Call the man, ask him whether he did it or not. If he did, he should resign. If he denies it, tell him that I will investigate and if he is in the wrong, I will put him behind bars.'"

"The CEO quit."



Tan Sri Tunku Shahrman Tunku Sulaiman says as firm as he was in office, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein was also a kind-hearted and friendly person. PIC BY SAIFULLIZAN TAMADI

Tunku Shahrman said Razak was a good judge of character, and he was careful in choosing the right person for the job.

"He chose people whom he could trust," Tunku Shahrman said, adding that Razak would also test them.

He said when he was the state government officer in Ipoh, there was a company called Syarikat Permodalan Perak. He was offered shares in the company but did not take it up.

Later, Razak asked for the company shareholders' list.

"He told me he was glad my name was not on the list."

Razak himself described Tunku Shahrman as "his most trusted civil servant" when announcing at an Umno assembly in 1974 that he (Tunku Shahrman) was to take over Perbadanan Nasional Bhd (Pernas) from Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who was to head Petronas then.

He went on to become the long-serving CEO of a government-linked company, working in Pernas for 27 years. And Tunku Shahrman was also the one whom Razak directed to see a sitting menteri besar to ask him

to resign.

As much as he was firm in office, Tunku Shahrman said Razak was also a kind-hearted and friendly person.

He and a few friends, including Razak's chief secretary and aide de camp, were among those who spent holidays with the prime minister's family.

"At the end of the year, Razak would take his family and us for a holiday on the ship *Hang Tuah*, where we would sail from Kuala Lumpur to Penang. We would stop at Pangkor, where Razak would water ski."

"In Penang, he would welcome Tun Lim Chong Eu (then chief minister) on board, who would bring the island's best street food."

Another place where Razak would take friends with him on holidays is Fraser's Hill, where he would play golf.

"We played golf with him, and later sat down for some chit-chat and a game of cards."

Tunku Shahrman, who is a board of trustees member in the Tun Razak Foundation, said he felt privileged to have known Razak closely and was proud to have earned his trust.