

**Tun Musa Hitam stood like a rock and he paid the price for it - Sultan Nazrin
Astro Awani
August 10, 2016**

HERE is the speech by His Royal Highness Sultan Dr Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah at the launch of the book, 'Frankly Speaking' by Tun Musa Hitam at the Kuala Lumpur Golf Centre here today.

Bismillahi Rahmani Rahim.

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

Salam Sejahtera.

Beta bersyukur ke hadrat ILAHI kerana dengan limpah rahmat daripada Nya juga, Beta bersama Raja Permaisuri dapat berangkat ke Majlis Pelancaran Buku 'Frankly Speaking' yang dihasilkan oleh Tun Musa Hitam. Tun bukan seorang kenalan baru. Pada awal tahun-tahun tujuh puluhan, semasa masih seorang pelajar, Beta seringkali bertandang ke Seri Taman, kediaman rasmi Perdana Menteri ketika itu, menziarahi Johari Razak (anak kepada Tun Abdul Razak). Sekali sekala, Beta melihat kehadiran Tun Musa di Seri Taman, seorang tokoh muda politik yang ketika itu lagi, bukan sahaja mencerminkan dinamisme dan karisma dari segi pemikiran dan pengucapan, tetapi turut memiliki ketampanan tubuh dan kesegakan rupa; seorang idola di kalangan pemuda dan pastinya pula mempunyai ramai peminat di kalangan pemudi. Sejak masih berusia muda, Beta turut berpeluang berkawan dengan anak-anak Tun, Mariana, Rashid dan Rozana. Beta juga merasakan kehilangan dan kesedihan yang amat sangat atas kehilangan Rashid pada usia yang begitu muda, semasa berlakunya tragedi Highland Towers pada 11 Disember 1993. Semoga roh Carlos Rashid Musa dicucuri rahmat oleh ALLAH Subhanahu Wata'ala. Al Fatihah.

2. For those of us who have had the privilege and benefit of knowing this commoner, as he describes himself in his book, Tun Musa Hitam is anything but common. The fact is

that he has left an indelible mark on his country, and history, I am confident, will judge him as such. As for the title of his book, “Frankly Speaking”, again, for those who have come to know him, Tun Musa has never shied away from being frank. Has that been an asset? Or has that been the reason why, as some have said, he was the best Prime Minister Malaysia never had? That again, is perhaps, best left for history to judge. But as Tun Musa says in his foreword, there will be brickbats and there will be bouquets; and somewhere in between the pages of this book, readers will find the insights of a man who was a hair’s breadth away from becoming the fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia, but walked away.

3. I had the pleasure of knowing Tun Musa closer when he spent a year as a Fellow at the Centre for International Affairs at Harvard. I was then a graduate student there. Since then, we have interacted on many occasions and I have had the benefit of listening to him at the many conferences we have attended together.

4. Tun Musa, as those who have followed his career will find, is among the handful of living Malaysians who have amassed a treasure of experience at the highest levels of government, politics and international affairs. It is no coincidence that he was viewed, as far back as four decades ago by Time magazine, as one of the top 150 individuals who would play a major role in world affairs.

5. Tun Musa is the son of a meter reader, and for those of this modern age who may not know, that was the job description for a person employed by the national electricity company to take manual readings of electricity consumption through meters placed outside people’s homes. Tun Musa was the only one of ten siblings to have made it to university. Hence, perhaps because of his humble background, he frequently describes himself as a “commoner”, for, in pre-independent Malaya, it was rare for someone of such modest beginnings to even dream of a tertiary education.

6. I would perhaps view Tun Musa as a product of “the Malaysian dream” when the citizens of this fledgling country harboured great expectations and aspired for great things. Many have achieved great things and the Malaysian story-book is replete with such tales – of sons and daughters of farmers, fishermen and labourers, becoming Prime

Ministers and business leaders, academics and leading professionals, innovators and thinkers. But of the hundreds of thousands who have realised their own Malaysian dream, Musa Hitam stands out among the handful who have left an ineradicable mark on the country he loves with a passion. By putting his experiences in print, Tun Musa walks us through a history many of us have forgotten and perhaps are unaware of. He observes that despite our physical progress as a nation, the challenges – from the time of pre-independence - remain the same, if not more dire.

7. Allow me to dwell on why Malaysia, and we as citizens who love this country, should view Tun Musa's observations seriously. Tun Musa started off as a student leader in the late 1940s and through the 1950s, both within a Malaya caught in the throes of fighting for independence amidst a terrifying prospect of a threatening communist insurgency, and on the international stage when long-colonialized nations were throwing off the shackles and embracing the same dreams that Malaya shared. Those were exciting and exhilarating times, especially for young firebrands like Tun Musa, who dreamed the proverbial impossible dreams.

8. Tun Musa, at that young age, travelled to places that few Malaysians then would have even dreamed of, and he interacted with leaders from different parts of the world, gaining insights that would eventually bolster his credentials as a leader in a post-independent Malaya. After graduation, he became an assistant district officer in a rural part of Johore and was exposed to rural poverty and the dependence of Malaysians on commodities such as rubber and tin, and how their hand-to-mouth existence depended on the vagaries of international demand and supply. This would shape his thinking and desire to improve the lot of his countrymen, first as a junior politician in the country's main political party, UMNO, then as a member of the Cabinet and eventually as the Deputy Prime Minister.

9. These early experiences would serve him well, when in the early 1970s, as a minister in the Cabinet of Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, he had to address and quell widespread dissatisfaction and protests from smallholders and workers in the rubber industry crippled by collapsing prices. His handling of this disquiet – better known as the Baling demonstrations -- probably established his credentials in the eyes of the country's

leaders and paved the way for higher office.

10. Tun Musa's recollections of that period – when he walked into a hostile crowd of thousands of hungry and angry settlers and villagers, dismissing his police guard and stepping onto makeshift platforms in rural Baling and Sik to address them – marked him as someone whose crisis management skills were crucial in a country still traumatised by the devastating 1969 racial riots.

11. Of greater interest, perhaps, would be his attention to detail and an analytical approach to problem solving in that crisis. He writes:

“As Primary Industries Minister, the task had fallen on me to initiate dialogues with different groups about rubber prices in the rural north. I remember that we had many meetings, talking through various options, sometimes even well into the night. I cannot remember how many hours and days my officials and I spent huddled in these discussions but it certainly was a difficult time.” (Page 163)

12. His approach to problem solving stood him in good stead when he spoke to the hostile crowds because he understood their problems; he accepted that their grouses were genuine, rather than try to blame these problems as instigations by external parties, as many did during that time; and he promised that he would try to find a solution to their problems. His honesty calmed the demonstrators, and his subsequent adherence to his promises, established his reputation as a man who would keep his word.

13. During this period, Tun Musa was again called upon to calm rising student agitation at Universiti Sains Malaysia, where students were demonstrating over the threat to the livelihoods of the people in Baling. He writes:

“The situation there was very similar, except that the students were playing audio tapes of the events in Baling over and over again to the audience, giving the impression that there had been a big uprising against the government by village folks both in Baling and Sik...

I went into the hall of the university where there was a standing room only gathering of students. The government officials there appeared to be nervous. When I took the stage, I tried to explain the situation calmly and sincerely, using facts and figures. I admitted that there were issues over rubber prices – ‘memang betul’ – I said. I also said that it was true that the village people were suffering. Again I promised them as I did in Baling and Sik that the government took the matter seriously and was committed to finding a solution...

At first, I was greeted by loud booing, but by the time I had finished, I heard only applause.” (Page 169)

14. Tun Musa sums up his approach to problem solving thus:

“Throughout my political career, I have always used the same modus operandi in crisis management. Rule number one is to remain calm and never display any weakness or indecisiveness. Rule number two: before you try to solve a problem, admit that it exists and try to understand it. Rule number three – explore all options fully. Only then, make an informed choice, having considered the consequences. (And) rule number four is equally important: you must stand by your decision. I would like to think that I have been fairly consistent in applying these basic principles.” (Page 172)

15. Indeed, he has, as he says, been fairly consistent in applying these principles. As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, Tun Musa was a hair’s breadth away from becoming the fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia but resigned and walked away in 1986, and stuck by his decision, although there were many a time and many a people who sought to persuade him to return to politics. Instead, he chose to stand by the side-lines, offering his views only when sought, or during times of crisis, and remaining a non-partisan voice of reason in the tumultuous world of modern-day Malaysian politics.

16. Just like his approach to the Baling demonstrations – which may not be remembered by many but were, at that time, a major issue which could have escalated – the other aspects of his career and life which would be an example that current and future

generations of Malaysians would do well to heed, are his views and thoughts on corruption and the handling of sensitivities in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like Malaysia's.

17. Of particular interest, perhaps is his tongue-in-cheek description of his brother Kadir, a carpenter who, Tun Musa says, "was the only family member who created a problem for me in Parliament." (Page 6-7)

"When I was Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry, opposition politician Tan Chee Khoon complained that Kadir had received a contract worth 9,000 Malaysian dollars to supply tables and chairs to some schools through the Education Department. The implication was that I had used my influence in government to get him the contract.

I had great respect for Tan Chee Khoon. And, in fact, I am grateful to him for giving me a quick lesson in the cut and thrust of parliamentary democracy. After the session, we carried on our conversation in the parliamentary lobby. He said: "If you hold office in government, you must be prepared to face questions and criticisms in performing your duties."

In reality, I did not know anything about Kadir's contract. As things turned out, the contract didn't do Kadir much good anyway because the Education Department took a long time to pay up. This was the only time he ever dealt with the Government. Kadir was always hard-working, always developing his business and determined to be independent in his little business dealings."

18. Tun Musa provides other examples, but his anecdote involving his brother and the 9,000 dollar contract, when juxtaposed against modern day realities where kith-and-kin of those in power – and I note this as a world-wide phenomenon – seem to think public office is a path to private gain, gives us an insight into leaders of an era where there were higher standards of conduct, and public office was a position of scrutiny and public trust.

19. His experiences in dealing with extremists and chauvinists on all sides of the

political spectrum, his anguish over the May 13 riots and his observation that “for Malaysia, the danger continues to lurk”, are views that all leaders and aspiring politicians must take seriously.

20. In the context of the Malaysian melting pot, there are many occasions in this book when Tun Musa refers to his “liberal” persona – a trait which was not appreciated by the more extreme within his own party and from the more conservative segments of society.

“I abhor extremism, and over the course of my political life, I have learnt to cultivate a liberal stance. This has often meant having empathy for the needs of communities other than my own. I would like to think that my upbringing in Johor, exposed as I was from an early age to multiculturalism, nurtured those moderate views. I have said many times that racialism and extremism are the easy route up the political ladder, and that only bankrupt politicians resort to such tactics.” (Page 96)

21. Indeed, ‘Frankly Speaking’ is a riveting book and there are many pearls of wisdom to be gleaned from Tun Musa’s experiences. In fact, I believe it should be read by every Malaysian, in particular, our school children, our politicians and in our universities. There are other titillating insights into our history – “the biggest black mark in his life and career – the Memali tragedy”, his relations with Malaysia’s founding father Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, who sacked him from government after the 1969 riots, his fondness for Tun Dr. Ismail Abdul Rahman, and Tun Abdul Razak (Tun Musa describes himself as a “Razak boy”) – and his long-time friendship and rocky relationship with Malaysia’s longest serving Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

22. It is thirty years since Tun Musa resigned as deputy prime minister, yet, his views are frequently sought. I am told that there is a joke amongst senior members of the media and political fraternity. He is sought after frequently for quotes by both the local, and more so, by the foreign media. And each time he says something, there are many from these fraternities who remark: “Ah... it’s that man Musa again.”

23. As we walk down memory lane with Tun Musa, we can ponder on his observations

about the leaders of that era – people who shaped his thinking and outlook such as Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Abdul Razak; Tun Hussein Onn and Tun Dr. Ismail; Tan Sri Dr Tan Chee Khoon and Dato Onn Jaafar.

24. It comes across clearly that not only the political leaders but the civil servants of that era dedicated their lives to public service as public service is meant to be – serving the people, strengthening the key institutions, and above all, upholding high integrity, observing transparency and maintaining public trust. Despite the communist insurgency, the difficulties in forging a united multi-ethnic society, the Konfrontasi and the separation with Singapore, it was their dedication and their spirit of public service which saw Malaysia become a model state, much envied by other countries, many of which had fallen into strife and become failed states.

25. We only have to compare ourselves with some of the countries which gained independence at or about the same time as Malaysia to be grateful that we did not see killing fields, genocide and crimes against humanity, where coups were common and military might upheld the interests of a few, while the majority languished in the quagmire of poverty and oppression.

26. Tun Musa takes us through those early days and shows us the many unsung heroes who brought us to where we are today. It is not uncommon to hear leaders – not only in government, but also in the private sector and NGOs – talk about principles and upholding principles. But really, the true test is when one has to take a stand and speak up for one's principles. Tun Musa has stood by his principles and he has done so with dignity. He relinquished his position as Deputy Prime Minister because he fundamentally disagreed with policy directions his principles would not allow him to accept.

27. He was the man in waiting; and had he waited long enough, standing by while the principles he cherished were cast aside, Tun Musa would have eventually occupied the top political post in the country. But instead, he stood for what he believed and resigned.

Thomas Jefferson said, "In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock."

Tun Musa stood like a rock and he paid the price for it.

28. Of particular interest are his conclusions in his later chapter, "Malaysia Today", where he observes:

"Malaysia today is going through a difficult transition. Trying to establish a mature democracy after more than two decades of authoritarian rule is not easy. Moreover, there is no guarantee that the current, more open political system will continue. Malaysia would, in fact, find itself gripped by reactionary forces that even now are advocating policies and practices that – if adopted – would eventually result in the country becoming a failed state." (Pg 343)

29. It is up to the reader to decide whether Tun Musa is correct in his assessment of where Malaysia is today. He ends his book with the foreboding last two words: "God Forbid!"

30. I congratulate Tun Musa Hitam on having published his book. I want to thank him for sharing with us his insights and experiences. I know of those who had worked with Tun Musa. They say he is a true democrat. He listens well, he respects divergent views, and he is consultative by nature. He agrees to disagree and, in stating his disagreement, he is dignified, refraining from humiliating anyone he disagrees with. Looking at his guest list of attendees today, it is obvious that his circle of friends and acquaintances come from a wide spectrum of humanity - cutting across religious, ethnic, professional and political lines. He is a great Malaysian.

31. Sabda Junjungan Besar kita, Nabi Muhammad Sallallahu Alai Wassalam bermaksud:

"Apabila mati seseorang anak Adam (manusia) maka terputuslah segala amalannya kecuali tiga perkara ia itu sadaqah jariah, ilmu yang dimanfaatkan dan doa anak yang soleh yang mendoakan kebaikan ibu bapanya"

32. Penerbitan yang diusahakan oleh Tun Musa ini adalah satu himpunan makluman - satu khazanah ilmu. Semoga Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala menerima usaha yang telah dirintis ini sebagai bahan ilmu yang memberi manfaat kepada para pembaca, kepada generasi hari ini dan generasi hari muka; dan melimpahkan ganjaran amal dan keberkatan kepada Tun Musa baik di dunia begitu juga di akhirat. Tun Musa, jasa Tun kepada negara bangsa amat kami hargai, bakti Tun akan kami kenang selama-lamanya.

Wabillahi taufik walhidayah,

Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

Tags: [Sultan Dr Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah](#), [Tun Musa Hitam](#), [Frankly Speaking](#)

© 2016 Astro Awani Network Sdn. Bhd. (535275-D) All Rights Reserved.

Source: <http://english.astroawani.com/malaysia-news/tun-musa-hitam-stood-rock-and-he-paid-price-it-sultan-nazrin-113549>