

Remembering Tun Razak, Malaysia's second prime minister

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Forty years ago, on January 14, 1976, Malaysia lost a statesman who played a key role in shaping the country's economic development and national unity.

He was Tun Abdul Razak, Malaysia's second prime minister, who served from 1970 to 1976.

Known as "bapa pembangunan" (or the father of development), Razak was the one who introduced the New Economic Policy.

His contributions were noted even before Malaya's independence as he was among key individuals, along with Tunku Abdul Rahman, who fought for the country's independence from the British.

In 1955, Razak was appointed education minister under the country's first Cabinet led by Rahman, who then became the first Malaysian prime minister.

During his tenure as education minister, Razak was instrumental in forming the fundamentals of the country's education system that replaced the colonial education system.

The Razak Report was established in 1956. It was aimed at building a united country through an education system that used Malay as the national language and the language of instruction.

The Razak Report was later enshrined as the Education Ordinance 1957.

During the May 13, 1969, racial riots, Razak who was then deputy prime minister and defence minister, was one of the key figures who helped curb the incident from getting worse.

After the government declared emergency following the incident, a caretaker government, the national operations council (NOC), was formed and chaired by Razak.

NOC managed to restore peace, thus forming the National Principles, a philosophy and national ideology established to foster unity among the people.

Taking over as prime minister in 1970, Razak introduced the New Economic Policy, which had a two-pronged strategy, namely to eradicate poverty and restructure society in order to create harmony and unity in the country.

But he was unable to draw up more plans for the country's development when he died of leukaemia on January 14, 1976, at the age of 53.

Although Razak served as a prime minister in a relatively short period, his contributions and sacrifice to the country could not be measured or replaced, and will be remembered forever.

The title "bapa pembangunan" was given to him for his contributions in laying the basis for the national development system, especially for rural economies.

Various agencies were established as a result of his efforts, such as the Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (Felcra), the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda), Majlis Amanah Rakyat (Mara), the National Corporation (Pernas), the Bumiputera Bank, Tabung Haji, Petronas and the Agricultural Bank.

He is also the father of Datuk Seri Najib Razak, the sixth and current prime minister.
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