

'Razak embodied integrity, honesty'

New Straits Times

November 24, 2019

By Ahmad Fairuz Othman

KUALA LUMPUR: GOOD leadership is not just about vision or vision turned into action, but also vital moral qualities like integrity and honesty in public office, said Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah.

The sultan of Perak said Malaysia's second prime minister, the late Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, demonstrated the traits in abundance.

He said Razak shunned all manner of corruption and ensured that not a penny of government funding was used to pay for his personal needs.

"He was dedicated to integrity and honesty in public office, and shunned all manner of corruption. He was obsessed, for example, with ensuring that not a penny of government funding was used to pay for his personal needs.

"Indeed, he is famously remembered for admonishing his officers for mistakenly putting a tube of toothpaste on the government tab while on an official trip abroad," he said at the launch of a renamed lecture theatre at Oxford University's Blavatnik School of Government (BSG) in the United Kingdom on Friday.

The lecture theatre was renamed the Tun Razak Lecture Theatre.

Sultan Nazrin said Razak only appointed qualified and competent administrators and technocrats, emphasising to them that they should always feel able to speak the truth to those in power and be honest with their superiors, without fear of reprisals.

He said Razak was the kind of leader who called for those in power to be scrutinised and checked, as exemplified with a speech that he once gave to Malaysian civil servants in which he asked them to stand up against wayward politicians because he believed that in a true democracy, civil servants had a duty to perform.

“With these words, he empowered civil servants to steadfastly implement policies for the nation’s benefit and to refuse to bow to the whims of wayward politicians.

“He proved himself to be the best kind of leader. The kind who calls for their power to be scrutinised and checked, while at the same time, using that power to the very best of ends.”

He said Razak knew the importance of nurturing new talent and he drafted many young men and women into the higher echelons of political and administrative establishments to play crucial roles.

He said as an alumnus of Oxford University’s Worcester College, he felt it was a great honour for Razak, known as Malaysia’s Father of Development, to have the hall named after him.

“As such, the commemoration of one of Malaysia’s founding fathers within these walls could hardly be more fitting.

“With his passion for good governance and deep concern for the wellbeing of the disadvantaged, Razak would have felt at home here at BSG.

Sultan Nazrin related the long list of Razak’s contributions to the country, including his most challenging moments when he was appointed as the director of the National Operations Council after Parliament was dissolved following the May 1969 race riots.

Subsequent events led to Razak establishing the Rukun Negara, National Economic Policy and Felda during his tenure as prime minister.

He said other hallmarks of Razak’s leadership were seen prior to his prime ministership, such as when as education minister, he oversaw the Razak Report in 1955, which formed the basis of the country’s education system.

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Source: <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2019/11/541665/razak-embodied-integrity-honesty>