

# Tributes

# to Tun Razak

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## Comment

by **Zainon Ahmad**  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

WHEN he was asked by his children to build a swimming pool in the compound of his official residence, *Sri Taman*, then prime minister Tun Abdul Razak Hussein said he would have to check the cost with the Public Works Department first.

After he was told a few days later that it was going to cost the government RM30,000, he told his children that it was too much money to spend for the convenience of only his family and he could not justify it.

“What will people say?” he asked.

The line – what will the rakyat say? – was his guiding principle whenever deciding on expenditure for his family’s comforts, rejecting completely arguments that he was entitled to spend a little extra after working so hard for the country.

Because of “what will people say?”, his children too had to sacrifice their desire for this and that.

Indeed what was their little sacrifices compared to the supreme sacrifice that their father made.

When he was diagnosed with leukaemia in 1969, he kept it a secret from his wife and children so that he could continue working. Worn out and sick, he died in a London hospital in 1976.

Much of this, and more, about Malaysia’s second prime minister emerged during the seminar on Tun Razak’s Legacy in National

Development organised by Akademi Pemuda, which is headed by Umno Youth deputy leader Khairy Jamaluddin, and Tun Razak Foundation Alumni.

The elaborate opening ceremony on Friday saw an outpouring of tributes from Khairy, who was born just four days before Abdul Razak died on Jan 14, Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, who is a nephew of the great man, and illustrious son Datuk Seri Najib.

Najib said his father’s role of a loyal number two to first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman was very instructive and that is the way he is serving Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

It would be un-Malay to do otherwise, he said.

Abdullah, who told Najib that “while you are his biological son, I am his political son”, also paid tribute to Abdul Razak in the short documentary that was screened at the end of the opening ceremony.

Everybody benefited from the seminar. But it was the Umno Youth leaders who, if they choose to be inspired by the thoughts and deeds of Abdul Razak, would stand to benefit the most.



But certainly, many more would have attended, appreciated and benefited from the seminar if it was organised by a less partisan organisation, a university, for instance, as Abdul Razak belongs to the nation and therefore his legacy should be

scrutinised by everyone.

The biggest tribute to the statesman was the presence in the audience of former civil servants who were part of the core group of people who had worked with Abdul Razak while he was deputy prime minister and prime minister trying to develop the fledgling nation.

It spoke a lot, too, about the loyalty of these grey eminences who are now in their late 70s and early 80s, old but still full of zest for life. Among them was Tan Sri Rama Iyer, Tan Sri Abdullah Ayub, Tan Sri Thong Yaw Hong, Tan Sri Abdul Rahman Arshad and Tan Sri Arshad Ayob.

Najib acknowledged their presence when after addressing everyone in the preliminary remarks of his speech he alluded to “friends of Tun Razak” while smiling at them.

No everyone at the seminar knew them. One spritely 80-year-

old Tan Sri made his way to the registration desk smiling that sweet smile that “in the old days” he reserved only for the gentler sex.

Either the smile had lost its charm or he could no longer do it the way he used to because none of the young girls who were manning the desk recognised him or even so much as pretended to exclaim in wonder after he introduced himself.

They searched the list for his name but he was not among those invited. But that did not put him off and he asked them whether he could attend.

After they said yes, off he went into the hall and walking jauntily towards his former colleagues looking as pleased as Punch.

