

**TITAH
DULI YANG MAHA MULIA
PADUKA SERI SULTAN PERAK DARUL RIDZUAN
SULTAN NAZRIN MUIZZUDDIN SHAH
IBNI ALMARHUM
SULTAN AZLAN MUHIBBUDDIN SHAH AL-MAGHFUR-LAH**

**PELANCARAN BUKU
“CONVERSATIONS WITH TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN”**

TARIKH: 28 JAMADIL AKHIR 1437/ 6 APRIL 2016 (RABU)

JAM: 10.00 PAGI

**TEMPAT: MEMORIAL TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN,
JALAN DATO ONN, KUALA LUMPUR**

Bismillahi Rahmani Rahim

Pelancaran penerbitan berjudul “Conversations With Tunku Abdul Rahman” pada pagi ini, menjadi lebih bererti apabila dilangsungkan di Memorial Tunku Abdul Rahman yang pernah menjadi residen kediaman rasmi Yang Teramat Mulia Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj ketika menjawat jawatan Perdana Menteri. Lantai, tiang, dinding dan bumbung Memorial ini telah menjadi saksi kepada pelbagai peristiwa dan perbualan penting yang berlaku dalam bangunan ini; andai kata lantai, tiang, dinding dan bumbung Memorial ini boleh berkata dan bersuara, tentulah banyak lagi rahsia yang dapat diketahui umum.

2. “Conversations With Tunku Abdul Rahman”, memaparkan kompilasi rakaman temu bual di antara Yang Teramat Mulia Tunku Abdul Rahman (Almarhum) dengan Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad yang telah berlangsung dalam tahun-tahun 1982 ke 1984. Bahan perbualan yang telah dibukukan, mengandungi sebahagian daripada khazanah maklumat penting lagi berharga yang telah dizahirkan oleh seorang putera bangsa yang amat berjasa kepada negara bangsanya. Yang Teramat Mulia Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj adalah nama yang terukir kukuh dalam sejarah negara bangsa sebagai Bapa Kemerdekaan. Jasa bakti Yang Teramat Mulia Tunku terus segar dalam ingatan – tetap subur dalam kenangan. Ketika hayatnya, Yang Teramat Mulia Tunku amat dikenali sebagai insan yang memancarkan sinar kemanusiaan sejagat, menyemarakkan semangat perpaduan, mengiramakan simfoni damai, mengalunkan lirik persaudaraan, merentasi sempadan agama, negara, bangsa, budaya dan strata sosio-ekonomi.

3. Yang Teramat Mulia Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra ialah seorang insan, seorang pemimpin, seorang negarawan yang menjadi milik dan kepunyaan umum, memiliki sifat terserlah lagi unggul, sifat mulia lagi murni. Ketika hayatnya, Almarhum telah dapat menyentuh setiap hati dan setiap jiwa rakyat. Ketika mangkatnya, berduyun manusia daripada pelbagai agama, bangsa,

strata sosial dan usia yang menziarahi jenazah Al-marhum, meskipun majoriti mereka tidak pernah bersua muka dengan Almarhum semasa hayatnya. Mereka berwajah muram, tanda kesedihan atas kehilangan aset negara yang amat berharga. Sama-samalah dipohonkan doa, semoga roh Almarhum Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, dilimpahkan sebesar-besar ganjaran ihsan dan rahmat ILAHI. Sempena perhimpunan ini, sama-samalah kita bertafakur sejenak, mengingati dan menghargai akan khidmat, jasa dan bakti yang telah diabadikan oleh Almarhum kepada agama, bangsa dan tanah air, sambil membacakan surah Al-Fatihah; semoga bacaan tersebut diterima oleh ALLAH Subhanahu Wata'ala sebagai amal dan ganjaran daripadanya dilimpahkan kepada roh Almarhum dan roh-roh isteri Almarhum yang telah bersama memberikan pengorbanan membantu Yang Teramat Mulia Tunku melakukan amal makruf. Al-Fatihah.

4. Tan Sri Abdullah's book is titled "Conversations with Tunku Abdul Rahman". In itself, the title would give any Malaysian cause to want to pick this book off the shelves. By any measure, Yang Teramat Mulia Tunku was a great Malaysian. He has been described in many glowing terms; as a leader and a gentleman; the people's Prince; or simply, and affectionately, as The Tunku. But in my mind, perhaps, most befitting, and as he is most popularly known, would be *Bapa Malaysia*.

Indeed, there can be no greater honour than to be deemed as the father of a nation and no one deserves that honour of being known as *Bapa Malaysia* more than Yang Teramat Mulia Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj.

5. In one chapter of this book, in conversation with the author, Tunku repeatedly says that he saw himself as “a man of the people” rather than as a Prince from a royal household. The Tunku, in his lifetime, always stressed that he may have been born in a palace but as a true democrat, he always regarded the people as the “real rulers of the country.” And he lived his life as a servant of the people; leading because he was democratically chosen to lead rather than because he believed it was his birth right. As a reflection of the man that he was, one particular quote by the Tunku stands out for me:

“If you think you are rich, there are many richer than you. If you think you are clever, there are more people cleverer than you. But if you think you are honest, than you are among the few; and in this instance, it is best to be among the few.”

6. There is no necessity for me to elaborate. I am certain we all know what it means because in its simplicity and directness, it is

also reflective of the man Tunku Abdul Rahman was – honest, direct and straight forward.

7. Today, we are gathered here for the launch of this book authored by Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad. Tan Sri Abdullah is a witness to history. For more than five decades, he has been in the thick of Malay politics at the highest levels. For that, I must state here, he has paid a heavy price. Perhaps many of our young do not remember; perhaps because our history books are silent on many aspects of our nation's adolescent years; or perhaps the custodians of our history feel that some events should be best left unremembered.

8. But I do remember that at the prime of his life, almost forty years ago, Tan Sri Abdullah was caught in the crosshairs of regional and domestic power play and was among the luminaries of that time who became, not of their choice, alumni of what author Kassim Ahmad refers to as *Universiti Kedua* (Second University). We know that university better as the Kamunting Detention Camp where Tan Sri Abdullah was detained without trial for more than four years.

9. Now, I would be wrong if I say that Tan Sri Abdullah was a bystander watching the intrigues of Malaysian politics by the side-lines. The facts are that Tan Sri Abdullah lived dangerously and revelled in the intrigues and the behind the scenes stuff that

Malaysia watchers are so fond of romanticising. In fact, in those heady days, he was in the thick of things, a player rather than a spectator. And that, in my mind, makes him better placed to write his eyewitness account of history than most Malaysians of his or this era.

10. The subject of his book – Yang Teramat Mulia Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-haj – will always be larger than life. While the history books will list him as the architect of Malaysia's independence, Malaysians of my era and the era of those early exhilarating days when a nation was born, will remember him as a fatherly figure who, as I said earlier, was simple, without being simplistic, was honest to the point of often being outrageous, and direct.

11. Tunku was a leader who could make outrageous jokes; he could laugh at himself and others; he would play the hula hoop on a stage; he could get people to forget their problems and laugh with him. But more than that, Tunku was a leader who strongly believed in the separation of powers and in upholding the institutional integrity of the judiciary, the legislature and the executive. His position as the country's Chief Executive was not meant for him to enjoy the privileges that he had as a prince; rather, it was a responsibility which he took seriously as a caretaker and custodian of the country's wealth which was to be shared by the people.

12. In a chapter in this book, the author records his conversation with the Tunku on the role of Malaysia's constitutional monarchs. The Tunku speaks of the role of the rulers in the fight for independence and he recounts how he had to play a balancing role in preventing excesses by some royal households. I believe that readers will find some of his solutions intriguing but again, it was because of his stature and because of his principles, that the Tunku could do what he did and prevail.

13. Although not exhaustive, I find the Tunku's comments, views and wisdom on the monarchy sobering and instructive. The Tunku was, in many ways, a role model to Malaysians of my era. On my part, I can only take heed of the wisdom imparted by this great man and do all that I can, as humanly possible, to adhere to his cherished principles of fairness and justice in my role as a monarch.

14. Perhaps, a telling anecdote of Tunku – a manifestation of his quote on honest men -- would be that in the thirteen years he was Prime Minister, he used the same Cadillac as his official car and when he retired, he used the same Mercedes Benz for 20 years until his passing in 1990.

15. From his writings in his columns *Looking Back* and *As I See It* in *The Star* and in his books, it is clear that the Tunku was heartbroken with the events that unfolded in May 1969. While he

could have taken the path that many Third World leaders of countries which obtained independence at or around the same time as Malaysia did – that is to cling to power through an iron – fist rule – he chose to relinquish his position rather than be a dictator and ultimately, leave the country that he loved impoverished and undeveloped.

16. The Tunku was not perfect and he would be the first to acknowledge that. But he was a leader who loved his people and his country.

17. He had a great sense of fairness and justice and while he loved his people and yearned to uplift the status of the Malays, the Tunku regarded all Malaysians as his own. Perhaps his sense of fairness and justice came from his love of sports. He became Vice-President of Kedah Football Association after his return from Cambridge in the late 1930s, and in 1949, he became President of the Selangor Football Association. He later served as President of the Football Association of Malaysia for 20 years. Today, while we are nostalgic when we view the movie *Ola Bola*, we should not forget that the foundations for our strong showing in those days was laid by Tunku who introduced the then prestigious Merdeka Cup Football Tournament. Those were our heydays.

18. Being an avid sportsman, Tunku was a firm believer that sports can be a good catalyst in bringing about greater social unity among Malaysians of various races and religions. Therefore, he supported and initiated many sports events. In 1958, he was elected as the first president of Asian Football Confederation (AFC), a post he held until 1976.

19. On the international stage, as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Tunku was among the prime movers to exclude South Africa from the Commonwealth because of its apartheid policies. Although it took many years, it was this first move to ostracise South Africa that eventually led to the breaking down of apartheid policies and Nelson Mandela's release and ascension to power.

20. The early years of Malaya and Malaysia were exciting, troubled, exhilarating and full of hope. Tunku oversaw the communist insurgency, the formation of Malaysia, the Indonesian Confrontation, and later the separation with Singapore, the May 13 riots and subsequently, gracefully stepping down to allow his long-time deputy Tun Abdul Razak Hussein to succeed him.

21. Among his many successes which are still reaping fruits for us are the establishment of the Islamic Welfare Organisation (PERKIM), an organisation to help Muslim converts adjust to new lives as Muslims. He was President of PERKIM until a year before

his death. In 1961, Malaysia hosted the first International Qur'an Recital Competition, an event that developed from Abdul Rahman's idea when he introduced and organised the first state-level competition in Kedah in 1951.

22. Malaysia is a founder member of the OIC. Its headquarters is in Jeddah but it was actually established at the Conference of Islamic Nations held in Kuala Lumpur in 1969. Tunku Abdul Rahman was its first secretary-general.

23. It is little wonder that those who remember that era yearn nostalgically for the carefree, joyous and promising early days of the Malaysia that was.

Martin Luther King Junior said: "We are not makers of history; we are made by history."

And to follow on that, George Santayana said that those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

24. Hence, I believe, it is imperative that people like Tan Sri Abdullah, put their eye-witness accounts in writing for posterity. Allow me to say a few words about the Abdullah Ahmad that I know.

25. He is charming, to say the least, and he can be outrageous and fun, very much like the Tunku who we remember. He has had a very colourful life as a politician, a diplomat, a journalist and most of all, as a person who – while living precariously - has enjoyed life to the fullest.

26. I have known Tan Sri Abdullah for more than 30 years. We have shared many pleasant hours in each other's company and I have been regaled by his stories. For those of you who do know him, you will know I listened more than I spoke in his company. But, I must say, I have enjoyed every moment.

27. I am happy that he has written this book because it gives another perspective on our past. He is, as I said earlier, an eyewitness to history. There have been too many of our forefathers who have taken their experiences and perspectives to the grave; hence, I am pleased that in recent times, there have been several books published, such as, Tun Dr. Ismail's memoirs, and now this book by Tan Sri Abdullah.

28. As a friend, I feel helpless in the face of Tan Sri Abdullah's frailty today. As mortals, we wish we could do more to ease the pain and sufferings of the ones we love and the ones we care for. You are always in my prayers, my friend, and I want to congratulate you on your tenacity in producing this book at a time when health

concerns take up so much of your time. It is my wish, and it is my prayer, that Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala's blessings will always be with you.

29. Penerbitan yang diusahakan oleh Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad 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 Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad baik di dunia begitu juga di akhirat. Tan Sri Abdullah, jasa Tan Sri amat kami hargai, bakti Tan Sri akan kami kenang selama-lamanya.

30. Dengan kalimah Bismillahi Rahmani Rahim, Beta dengan sukacitanya melancarkan hasil karya Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad berjudul "Conversations With Tunku Abdul Rahman".

Wabillahi taufik walhidayah,

Wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.