

In memory of a leader who practised human governance

In this column, I am taking a breather from addressing the issues of 'what is' and 'how to' implement human governance (HG) to share about a leader who embodied and practised HG. He was the very person who made it possible for Putra to be synonymous with HG – the late Datuk Dr Ir Radin Umar Radin Sohadi.

Reflecting on Putra's journey takes me back to 29 Jan 2011, exactly 29 days after he assumed the position of Universiti Putra Malaysia's (UPM) Vice Chancellor. I had anticipated a debate of sorts, about why he should allow me to pursue HG at my individual level versus his desire to institutionalise HG, knowing clearly there were only three advocates of HG at that time. But I was left dumbfounded when asked, "Have you done enough good deeds to let this opportunity slip by?" It was not so much the question that deeply touched my heart, rather the

manner in which it was asked – the sincerity that was embodied in the voice, the inner voice of a leader who wished to make a difference in the lives of others. I just could not say no, though I still negotiated for time and counter-proposed conditions before accepting.

If there was a defining moment to mark the birth of Putra as the institution to carry the HG message, that event was it. Giving effect to the Malaysian Cabinet's decision in 2007 for the Graduate School of Management (GSM), UPM, to be novated into an autonomous business school began as an answer to that question. The decision to set up the Yayasan Putra Business School as the governing body was but only a legal route towards making GSM a fully

autonomous entity in every sense, including financial accountability.

What followed next was too smooth to be coincidental – the approvals by the UPM Senate and the UPM Board (LPU), the recommendation by the then Minister of Higher Education Datuk Khalid Nordin, the subsequent approval by the Minister of Finance Datuk Seri Najib Razak and finally the approval by the Companies Commission of Malaysia on 23 Aug 2011. From Sept 2011, our journey focused on the setting up of Putra, culminating in the receipt

of the official licence to operate from 10 Oct last year from the then Ministry of Higher Education. While the legal matters were settled, the operations only just began. And

to reduce, if not eliminate, future encumbrances that could impede the growth of Putra, the late Datuk Radin, known as DR, the initials that grew familiar through our many SMS conversations, had managed to get an agreement signed between UPM and Yayasan Putra Business School. This agreement, which details the working relationship between UPM and the Yayasan, was signed on 31 Dec last year, the last day of DR's term as the UPM 6th Vice Chancellor; he had to withdraw due to the advanced stage of his cancer.

On 13 Oct this year he left us to join the Creator, but our memory of him is permanent.

Just recalling the manner in which he led his life, especially since his home-coming to UPM after serving as the Director General of the Ministry of Higher Education, puts us all to shame. I remember on one occasion seeing pain written all over his face,

yet from his conduct when chairing a meeting earlier that day, not many would have guessed what he was experiencing. Wherever he served, his passion to see the organisation achieve excellence could never be doubted. He practised *adab*, giving credit when due, and reprimanding the deserving. He was selfless, choosing to sow seeds when he knew he would not see the fruits. So for us at Putra, remembering him is enough reason to strive to be that home-grown business school that promotes a curriculum drawing upon the philosophy of Eastern tradition while being globally relevant.

I share here among his last messages captured on my mobile: "My days are near... *mata dah kuning*, energy depleting... please continue the mission..."

To the late DR, we make *doa* for you to be among the souls of those blessed by Allah. Al-Fatihah.



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