

PAK LAH: THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT HIM

Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was the country's fifth Prime Minister, and best known by the citizens of Malaysia as Pak Lah. We've combed the books and the Internet to compile some fun facts about our fifth Prime Minister you may not have. Read on:

1. THE SON OF A PREACHER MAN

Dusty Springfield aside, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi really is the son of a preacher man. He was born into a family with a strong religious background. His father, the late Ahmad Badawi, was a prominent religious figure and a member of UMNO. His grandfather, the late Sheikh Abdullah Fahim, was a well-respected religious leader and nationalist, as well as one of the founding members of Hizbul Muslimin, later known as PAS. His grandfather also founded the Daeratul Maarif al-Wataniah, then a *pondok* school which Tun Abdullah attended for his Islamic and Arabic studies.

2. HIS CHILDHOOD BEST FRIEND

Growing up, Tun Abdullah's best friend was a Malay boy named Fatah Abdullah who lived not far from Tun Abdullah's house. Both of them went to the same primary school in Bertam. Fatah was Abdullah's shadow and conscience, and there were no secrets between them! The two were always looking forward to the fruiting seasons. They would ask permission to collect mangosteens and rambutans from the orchards and earned money by reselling them. Abdullah's grandfather, Sheikh Abdullah Fahim, would buy from them but would tell everyone he bought from the market. This was a secret that only the three of them knew for the longest time.

3. TUN ABDULLAH LOVES FISHING

When Abdullah and Fatah were kids they both loved to fish at the paddy field. Between the two of them, they had about 20 to 30 makeshift fishing rods which they would stick into the mud with worms as bait. They would then go away for an hour or so, and would return to see which rod was bent (a sign that it had caught fish). To this day, Tun Abdullah still loves to fish. He enjoys going to Perth, Australia for his holidays as it is a great spot for deep-sea fishing.

4. PAK LAH WAS A BOY SCOUT

After his grandfather allowed him to attend an English School, young Abdullah got into Batu Mertajam High School. This was where he met Mr. Ng Soo Chai, his English teacher and Scout Master. Abdullah joined the Scouts and quickly rose through the ranks to become Troop Leader which placed him in charge of several patrol leaders. Mr. Ng described him as a good and respected scout leader, as Abdullah was efficient at managing campsites and assigning duties such as setting up tents, collecting firewood and water, cooking, and cleaning up. Inevitably, Abdullah's religious background made him the camp's designated "slaughterman", the one who slaughtered the chickens to be cooked!

5. HE WAS THE PRESIDENT OF *GABUNGAN PELAJAR MELAYU SEMENANJUNG* (GPMS)

During his second year at University Malaya, at the encouragement of the outgoing President Mr Sanusi Osman, Tun Abdullah contested for the presidency of GPMS and won. Tun Abdullah was President of GPMS for four years. Back then, GPMS's main focus was to improve the education attainment of Malay undergraduates by setting up scholarships. To the surprise of the GPMS committee, Tun Abdullah opposed the idea saying that there were many more government scholarships than there were eligible students. He changed the focus to helping underachieving secondary school Malay students who needed remedial lessons. Tun Abdullah brought his idea to Tun Abdul Razak (then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Rural Development), and was given a grant of RM25,000, a lot of money then, for his remedial tutoring programme.

6. MEETING THE LOVE OF HIS LIFE

In 1964, Tun Abdullah applied to join the Malayan Civil Service, and was assigned to the Federal Establishment Office (FEO). It was here that he met Tun Endon Mahmood. She was a stenographer who was assigned to help the head of the FEO. But whenever the head was away, Tun Endon's supervisor assigned her to help Tun Abdullah instead. They got married in 1965.

7. HE LOVES CLASSIC CARS

In 1959, Tun Abdullah had a classic Mini Cooper that he sold off, and later regretted. In 2002, a friend saw the same car in a yard. His friend bought it, restored it with original parts, and gave it to Tun Abdullah as a gift, much to Tun Abdullah's happy surprise. Tun Abdullah was particularly fond of this car as it was the one his son, Kamaluddin, would pretend to drive as a kid. His collection of cars now includes the classic Mini Cooper, an Alfa Romeo, the 1960 Mercedes-Benz 190SL, and a black Morris Minor.

8. PAK LAH IS A POET

*Aku cari bukan harta bertimbun-timbun,
Untuk hidup kaya,
Aku cari bukan wang berjuta-juta,
Untuk hidup bergaya,
Aku cari bukan kawan-kawan,
Untuk hidup sekadar berfoya-foya,
Aku cari mana dia Al-Ghazali,
Aku cari mana dia Al-Shafie,
Kita bongkar rahsia kitab suci,
Cari pedoman,
Kita bongkar rahsia sunnah nabi,
Cari panduan,
Aku hidup kerana Dia Rabbi,
Dialah teman,
Dialah wali ,
Dia mencukupi,
Aku hidup bererti,
Menikmati Damai Abadi.*

You just enjoyed a poem by Tun Abdullah. Entitled '*Ku Cari Damai Abadi*', this poem was translated into more than 80 languages and published as a book in 2008 by Associate Professor Dr. Victor A. Pogadaev, a Russian scholar based in University Malaya.

9. HIS FAVOURITE THINGS

In 2005, The Star newspaper, with the help of Tun Abdullah's daughter, Nori, published a list of his "favourites" to help Malaysians get to know their Prime Minister better. Here are some of Tun Abdullah's favourite things:

World historical figure	: Prophet Muhammad
Book	: the Holy Quran, a book he reads almost everyday
Role model	: Tun Abdul Razak, the second Prime Minister of Malaysia
Local holiday spot	: Pangkor Island
Overseas holiday spot	: Japan
Food	: Rice porridge
Drink	: Warm water
Song	: <i>Bahtera Merdeka</i> by Ahmad Jais
Film	: My Fair Lady
Hobby	: Collecting <i>tongkat</i> (walking sticks)