

## Remembering the day before the day

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Tomorrow, we remember.

But today, we lament.

Tomorrow, Sept. 11 -- the five-year anniversary -- we see the deluge of grizzly images, we hear speeches from politicians, we make vows to avenge those who perished, we make grim promises to fight on in the war on terror.

But today is just as sad an anniversary. Today, in some ways, aches even more.

If Sept. 11 was the day we never saw coming, Sept. 10 was the day we will

## How dearly we miss June 6

October 30, 2006

BRENDAN PEREIRA ON MONDAY:  
THE NEW STRAITS TIMES

WE never saw June 7 coming. Sure, there were whispers that he was not happy with the way his successor was running the country; with the way ministers and business friends were not returning calls.

But no one saw June 7 coming. That was the day Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad accused the PM of stabbing him in the back; of reversing his policies; of canceling projects, including the half-bridge to Singapore. He attacked with the ferocity of a street fighter and suggested that Abdullah was the second choice for the top job in the country.

He wanted to know why Tengku Mahaleel Tengku Ariff was no longer running Proton, why development in Putrajaya had slowed down. He wanted to know why the person he left in charge of the country was no longer dancing to his tune.

Looking back, that was the day when he crossed the line. History records these watershed events because they change the mood of the country, pit kin against kin and dominate the landscape.

If June 7 is the day we never saw coming, June 6 is the day we will not

never see again.

And we miss it terribly.

We miss when you could pull up at an airport without bracing for a military exercise.

We miss when toothpaste was not considered a weapon.

We miss when the most well-known Muslim names in America were professional athletes.

We miss when a cell was a biological term.

We miss when politicians didn't make you feel that you're one of us or you're one of them.

We miss when one party didn't call the other party cowards and consider that a foreign policy.

We miss Sept. 10.

### **The tragic reminder**

We miss when going to New York City meant a mandatory trip to a Broadway play, not a mandatory trip to a large, sad hole in lower Manhattan.

We miss when seeing someone reading the Quran didn't make us nervous.

We miss when we actually celebrated how free and open our borders were.

We miss when **Al-Jazeera** was just another TV channel wed never heard of.

see again for a while.

And how we miss it.

We miss going to lunches or dinners and just shooting the breeze, instead of spending hours dissecting the latest tirade and figuring out why power is so hard to let go.

We miss those days when people didn't make you feel that you're one of us or you're one of them.

We miss the time when half-past six was used in a moment of levity between childhood friends.

We miss the time when exclusive interviews about Malaysia on **CNN, BBC, CNBC or Bloomberg** were about the country and its prospects, not about

a political sideshow.

We miss when we saw war crimes and said, "Our soldiers don't do that, instead of, "Well, look at what the other guys do."

We miss when a can of aerosol can was not considered a weapon.

We miss when Islam was just another religion in the world.

We miss the days we watched leaders in other countries slug it out in public and said: At least our leaders don't do that.

We miss when pilots used to let kids come up to see the cockpit.

We miss when movies would open with shots of a skyline and two giant blue towers.

We miss when we never thought of sending anthrax through the mail, or lighting a shoe on fire, or putting explosives in sports drink bottles.

We miss simplicity.

We miss Sept. 10.

### **A troubled future**

We miss when jihad was a foreign word.

We miss when belts could stay on.

We miss when we didn't war amongst ourselves over a war somewhere else.

We miss when we didn't war among ourselves over a war being waged by an individual.

We miss when we thought paying for gas was just an expensive habit, not a means of enriching our enemies.

We miss when we spoke to our Arab neighbors and didn't hear a voice in our

We miss when we spoke to a friend and didn't hear a voice in our heads

heads whispering, I wonder whose side they'd be on?

We miss when you didn't have to show ID for everything.

We miss the feeling that there wasn't a large cloud hanging over our future, and our children's future, and our grandchildren's future, a feeling that nothing could be trusted, that you were never really safe, that this enemy which is only too happy to die for its cause wants to make sure we go first -- and this enemy is not going away.

We miss sleeping soundly.

We miss not being so smart.

We miss our naivety.

We cry on Sept. 11.

whispering: I wonder whose side he is on?

We miss when peace talks referred to discussions between the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lanka government or between the warring factions in Palestine.

We miss the feeling when there wasn't a cloud hanging over the political landscape, and a feeling that no words or explanations can be a balm to this festering sore.

We miss the days when the mention of Dr Mahathir's name unleashed a vision of a leader handing over power at the peak of his powers, not a mental picture of someone seeking to bring down someone in power.

We miss the days when the prime minister had to defend his policies, not parry personal attacks.

We miss when a volley referred to a sweet left foot strike by Wayne Rooney, not a barb fired across the bow by the former PM against his perceived enemies.

We miss when we spoke of a legacy in glowing terms not with a sense of doom.

We miss when the world looked at us with pride and wondered why other young countries could not have a smooth change of guard.

We miss when Dr Mahathir spoke like

a statesman.

We miss the time when we did not have to rake up our dark past and remember stories of former prime ministers taking on incumbents. Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Hussein Onn deserve their rest and place in history.

We miss the days when the battle lines were clear — government versus opposition.

But we miss Sept. 10.

Yes, we miss June 6.