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Profile-Osman
KEDAH MOVED INTO INDUSTRIAL ERA UNDER OSMAN

By: Fisol Jaafar

ALOR SETAR, June 10 (Bernama) -- Kedah, a hitherto agriculture state with padi cultivation as its economic mainstay, has established itself as a centre for industrial activities in northern peninsular Malaysia.

From an agriculture-based economy, it is now paying more attention to the industrial sector which promises better returns, especially in terms of development and job opportunities to improve the people's socio-economic standard.

It cannot be denied that Tan Sri Haji Osman Aroff, who took over from Datuk Seri Syed Nahar Shahabudin as Kedah's fourth Menteri Besar in 1985, has played a role in this transformation.

This achievement must have been inspired by his desire to help mould a Malaysian race with integrity and one which commands respect, apart from his encouragement to the people, especially Bumiputeras, to be creative and innovative to attain success and prosperity.

This is not surprising for he had tasted the bitterness of life in poverty, an experience which strengthened his resolve to struggle for the people, especially the rural community.

Born on Nov 23, 1940 into a farmer's family in Kampung Kelubi, Kubang Pasu, Osman received his early education at Sekolah Melayu Jitra before enrolling at Kolej Sultan Abdul Hamid, Alor Setar, in 1951 and passed his Senior Cambridge in 1958.

He then furthered his studies in political science at a university in the United States.

Osman had an early start in politics, attending local Umno meetings and gatherings even when he was in his teens.

His interest and determination in politics did not go unnoticed, and Osman was given the trust to be the Tanah Merah Umno Branch secretary in 1956 at the age of 16.

Two years later he helped found the Jitra Umno Division and was made its first Youth chief when the Kedah Utara Umno Division became the Jitra Umno Division, which is now known as the Kubang Pasu Umno Division.

At a tender age, he was also given the trust to be the representative of several leading politicians, including Tan Sri Fatimah Hashim who contested the Jitra-Padang Terap parliamentary seat in 1959.

On completion of his overseas studies in 1963, Osman was appointed the Malaya Umno Youth Assistant Secretary to replace Hamzah Alang who passed away.

Osman led the Kubang Pasu Division from 1969 to 1972, until Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad took over as the chief and Osman was elected the deputy chief, a position he has been holding since.

Osman worked at the Taiwan consulate in Kuala Lumpur for three years before resigning to contest the 1969 general election on an Alliance ticket. He beat PAS candidate Ayub Ishak for the Jitra seat, which he won for the seventh consecutive time at the last general election in 1995 to make him the longest serving state assemblyman in Kedah.

In 1972, Osman was appointed a state executive councillor and he was the acting Menteri Besar for 42 days when Datuk Seri (now Tun) Syed Ahmad Al-Haj Syed Mahmud Shahabudin went on overseas vacation in 1976.

He was retained as an Exco member when Syed Nahar took over the state government's reins, and on Jan 28 1985 Osman took his oath as the Menteri Besar before the Sultan of Kedah, four days after Syed Nahar announced his

resignation. -- BERNAMA
MFJ YBY