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Know country's history well, Malaysians told

Kamarul Yunus

MALAYSIANS should know the country's history so as to love it more. At the same time, they can appreciate and respect past leaders who had fought for independence, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

Malaysians, he added, should rightfully be proud of past leaders such as the late Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Alhaj, the late Tun Abdul Razak Hussein and the late Tun Hussein Onn.

Describing them as "far-sighted", Dr Mahathir said they devoted the best part of their lives to bring about national development following independence.

The prime minister said this when launching a book entitled "Tun Razak - Jejak Bertapak Seorang Patriot" in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

He said the late Razak deserved credit and be held in high esteem for uplifting Bumiputera economic well-being and living standards to be at par with the other races.

The New Economic Policy which he mooted is now a legacy of his struggle to redress racial economic imbalance besides other national development policies.

Dr Mahathir said he is much indebted to Razak.

He would not be where he is now if not for him.

"Much of what happened to me was because of him, to the extent that the then prime minister, Hussein, picked me as his deputy," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was not close to Hussein and was himself perplexed as to why he was picked to be Hussein's deputy.

"It was perhaps because of my performance as education minister under Razak that prompted him to nominate me to Hussein as deputy prime minister.

"Personally, I'm grateful to the late Razak. The nation also owed much to him, who is the Father of Development," he said.

Comparing the attitude of past leaders with the present ones, Dr Mahathir recalled that the late Razak often cycled to the interior and was always seen with his walking stick.

Unlike the leaders of today, who moved about in Mercedes cars, past leaders also did not throw their weight around and were humble.

The prime minister commended veteran journalist Datuk Zainuddin Maidin for coming up with the book in collaboration with the Tun Razak Foundation and publisher, Utusan Publications and Distributors Sdn Bhd.

Zainuddin, or better known as Zam, is the former editor-in-chief of Utusan Malaysia.

"Zam is a friend of mine. Politicians have to befriend journalists, otherwise they'll clobber us flat," Dr Mahathir said in jest.

He hopes Zainuddin's book would serve as a reference to Malaysians of all races, particularly students.

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