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Dilemma-Reaction

MAHATHIR'S CHANGE OF OPINION ON MALAYS HAILED

KUALA LUMPUR, May 12 (Bernama) -- A professor who was the first critic of the 1970 book "The Malay Dilemma" written by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, today welcomed the admission by the Prime Minister that his views in the book on the inability of the Malays to succeed have been proven wrong.

Prof Dr Syed Hussein Alatas, a former vice chancellor of Universiti Malaya and now a professor at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, said Dr Mahathir's admission that he had made a judgmental error in the book showed that he had a great deal of courage and integrity.

"I was the earliest strong critic of Dr Mahathir's view that the Malays were lazy because they were genetically weak. His example to say now that he is wrong in holding the view should be followed by other leaders who might have done the same thing on fundamental issues," Dr Syed Hussein told Bernama.

He said he came out with two books -- "Siapa Yang Salah" (Who's Wrong) and "The Myth of the Lazy Natives" -- to counter Dr Mahathir's views on the Malays.

Dr Mahathir made the admission when closing a forum on the history of Umno, held in conjunction with the party's 51st anniversary here yesterday.

"In those books, I argued that the weakness of the Malays to progress was not due to their genetic problem but because of the Malay leaders at the time who did not inspire the Malays to succeed like what Dr Mahathir himself is doing now," he said.

But Dr Syed Hussein said Dr Mahathir's change of opinion should not devalue the book in any way.

"Just because he has admitted for the first time that he was wrong in holding such views and make a correction on his stand on certain parts of the book should not devalue the book because the writing of the book at that time was a very important step undertaken by Dr Mahathir to arouse consciousness about the problems afflicting the Malays," he said.

"There are so many other views expressed by Dr Mahathir in the book which have been proven right and in my own books, I wrote my appreciation to him for this honesty," he added.

Dr Mahathir said yesterday that at that time he was very disappointed that the Malays lacked confidence and he too lost confidence that the Malays would succeed.

"But now I reverse my stand. I no longer believe what I wrote in The Malay Dilemma," he said.

He cited the case of Malays now controlling giant companies, including that of a padi planter's son who now owned an airline company, obviously referring to Malaysia Airlines chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli. -- BERNAMA

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