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Mahathir-Umno (Shahnon)

PM CRITICISES PAS FOR THEIR DEFENCE OF SHAHNON'S NOVEL

KUALA LUMPUR, June 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has criticised PAS for defending national literary figure Datuk Shahnon Ahmad's novel "Shit" which contained obscene and vulgar words.

He expressed regret that Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, who heads PAS' council of scholars, had sanctioned the use of such obscene and vulgar words by Shahnon.

Dr Mahathir said he knew that politics was dirty but did not think it could be that dirty.

"And it becomes even dirtier as it comes from a party like PAS which links itself to the Islamic religion," he said in his address as Umno president at the party's 53rd general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre, here, today.

"As they are prepared to cooperate with the devil, right from the beginning they have been possessed by the devil to the extent that they are not only prepared to insult me and my mother but also show disrespect towards God," he said.

Dr Mahathir asked how Nik Aziz could stand by such obscene and vulgar words in the novel.

He said that in his efforts to protect a life member of PAS, Nik Aziz had even shown disrespect towards God by saying that it was also done by God.

Point out where in the Quran and other holy books that this was so, he said.

The prime minister also said he was disappointed that Shahnon had hurled insults not only at him but also to his mother.

"I don't know why Shahnon has so much anger and hatred towards me. I have never criticised Shahnon, what more to insult him," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that for the Malays, insulting one's parents was an act most forbidden.

"Has Shahnon turned into a Westerner who is unmannered and who could not open his mouth without cursing and swearing. Books by Westerners are full of vulgar words and for people who believe that sodomy is a basic right, the use of such words is appropriate," he said.

He said that Shahnon wrote the novel as he was influenced by the style of writing of Westerners who used words that would make people upholding Eastern values embarrass.

As such, he said, he had asked the office of the Umno secretary-general to supply to the 2,034 delegates at the general assembly excerpts of "The Hammer of Eden", a novel by Ken Follett, containing obscene and vulgar words.

"But should we copy them? Is Shahnon looking down at the culture of the Malays?" he said.

Dr Mahathir said that he had met Shahnon once and after he became prime minister, Shahnon was offered a high paying job as professor and accorded recognition as a national literary figure.

"I have never obstructed his progress. His previous books could be used as text books and he certainly gained a lot from this. His short story, PIEM, published in Dewan Sastera (1993) contained attacks against me but I had not reacted with anger against him," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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