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Umno-Debate (Apology)

SHAHNON ASKED TO APOLOGISE TO MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, June 18 (Bernama) -- A Perlis Umno delegate wants national laureate Datuk Shahnon Ahmad to apologise to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the prime minister's mother for allegedly using crude language against them in his novel "Shit".

Shahnon should also apologise to his own mother, delegate Azihani Ali said when debating on the party president's policy speech at the Umno General Assembly here.

"I don't know if this son in his 70s still has a mother," he said to laughter from the floor.

"We Muslims understand that if we commit a wrong by insulting others, we must apologise to them. The opportunity to apologise to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir is still there but the opportunity to apologise to the mothers...he has to answer in the hereafter," he said.

Azihani also urged Shahnon, who is a PAS member, to emulate Umno speakers Ustaz Omar Khalid and Ustaz Ghazali Ahmad who had left PAS and openly apologised for past mistakes.

Azihani said PAS leaders should join Umno if they really wished to defend and fight for Islam.

In his policy address, Dr Mahathir said he was disappointed that Shahnon had allegedly hurled insults at him and his mother.

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

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

According to him, Shahnon wrote the novel as he was influenced by the style of writing of Westerners who employed words that would embarrass people upholding Eastern values.

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 were allowed to 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 did not react with anger," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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