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LEAD Condolences-Usman

DR MAHATHIR, DR SITI HASMAH SEND CONDOLENCES TO USMAN'S FAMILY

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 29 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali today sent a message of condolence to the family of novelist and poet Datuk Usman Awang who died early today.

Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah in their message expressed the hope the family would bear his passing with patience.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and his wife Datin Seri Endon Mahmood also sent condolences to the family.

The Deputy Prime Minister described the death of Usman as a big loss to the world of literature and to Malaysians.

"The late Usman Awang's contributions to the literary world are immense and beyond comparison. He was a steadfast and determined poet and novelist and we have lost a pearl which had given light to the literary world all this while," Abdullah said.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Information Ministry Datuk Zainuddin Maidin said the country had lost a great literary figure whose strength lay in his ability to make people understand the beauty of literature in simple language.

Eventhough inclined towards leftist politics, the late Usman was not tied to his leanings and gave fair assessment and respect to the leaders in his poetry, he said.

The national laureate also known as Tongkat Warrant died at the Pantai Medical Centre at 12.35am. He was 72.

A diabetic for 20 years, Usman was admitted to the centre at 8 last night due to heart complications.

He leaves four children Haslina (57), Iskandar (41), Mohd Yassin (40) and Mayawati (28).

He began writing poems in 1948 and later produced several short stories, novels and drama scripts.

Among the famous poems he wrote were "Ke Makam Bonda" and "Bunga Popi" and also produced an anthology entitled "Dari Derita Bangsa".

-- BERNAMA

FA AHH AAM