

17/04/2001

Former rector: Dr Mahathir is real and true father of IIUM

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The first rector of the International Islamic University Malaysia said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was the "real and true father" of the university.

Tan Sri Professor Dr Muhammad M. Abdul Rauf, 83, said if not for Dr Mahathir, the IIUM would not have been established.

"I am happy he is being given the honour to open the university after its establishment in May 1983 at the Petaling Jaya campus."

Muhammad, who arrived from the United States with his wife Puan Sri Buthayna Abdul Rauf to attend the opening of the IIUM Gombak campus by Dr Mahathir tomorrow, said he was happy with the university's status.

He attributed the success of the IIUM to the hard work put in by its present rector Professor Dr M. Kamal Hassan and his team of deputy rectors and staff.

"The IIUM is what it is today because of the support given by its founder Dr Mahathir and his Government," he told the New Straits Times at the Legend Hotel.

He said it had been Dr Mahathir's dream for a very long time to establish an international Islamic university in Malaysia with the medium of instruction being English so that its doors could be opened to students from all over the world, both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Muhammad, an Islamic scholar from Egypt, came to Malaysia to establish the country's first Islamic college in Klang on Feb 2, 1955 and stayed on for nine years and four months before leaving for his homeland.

He was persuaded to return when Dr Mahathir announced the setting up of the IIUM and directed then Education Minister Datuk Dr Amar Sulaiman Daud (now Tan Sri) to look for a reputable academician cum scholar to head it.

"I was overjoyed at the thought of coming back to the country and people I love.

"I came back and took up the post of the rector. I had a wonderful team who helped me throughout my tenure.

"The IIUM is always close to my heart and mind," said the father of four children and grandfather of 12.

Sulaiman Daud, contacted in London, said he was happy Dr Mahathir is opening the Gombak campus tomorrow as it is a dream come true for the man who founded it.

"It is an honour bestowed on him, especially with him having conceived the idea," he added.

He said it took Dr Mahathir a lot of thinking and courage to set up the IIUM with the medium of instruction being English.