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Memoirs of Said Zahari launched

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The memoirs of former journalist and political activist Said Zahari, 73, who was imprisoned for 17 years in Singapore's Changi prison, were launched today.

The 374-page *Meniti Lautan Gelora - Sebuah Memoir Politik* (Dark Clouds On Dawn), launched by Utusan Publications & Distributors Sdn Bhd, is a joint effort with Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and retails at RM28.

The memoirs were written during Said Zahari's attachment as a guest writer at UKM. He returned here after his expulsion from the country was retracted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in May, 1989.

Speaking at today's launch of the memoirs, Information Ministry's Parliamentary Secretary Senator Datuk Zainuddin Maidin said:

"Generally, the book records his controversial experiences ... such exposure is invaluable to the future generation as it will serve as a useful guide on the country's historical events."

"Readers will be able to unearth the writer's thoughts and understand his struggle."

Said ventured into journalism in 1951, a few months after (Tan Sri) A. Samad Ismail who was then Utusan Melayu's political journalist was detained by the British forces.

He adopted the slogan of Merdeka and not Hidup Melayu which was in line with the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of India, Indonesia, Indo-China and Asian-African countries in 1940-50.

After becoming news editor of Utusan Melayu in 1959, Said spearheaded the fight to preserve Press freedom.

The memoirs also touch on the involvement of Said in a political movement against Lee Kuan Yew's Peoples Action Party (PAP) in Singapore in 1961.

For his political actions, Said remained a political prisoner for 17 years in the republic's Changi prison. He also delves on his suffering during his detention and expulsion and other difficulties.

In other parts of the book, Said talks on his sufferings while in detention, during his expulsion and the underlying threats on his life.

He also delves into several important events like the meeting between the late Tunku Abdul Rahman and Chin Peng in Baling, Kedah in 1955 during the Emergency, and others.

"Whether or not we agree with Said's writings, we cannot deny that Said is a part of Utusan's history."

Among those present were Utusan Group executive chairman Tan Sri Kamarul Ariffin Yassin, UP&D executive director Roselina Johari, UKM associate professor Dr Rahman Embong.

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