

18 JUN 2002

Mahathir-book

DR MAHATHIR REGRETS NOT MUCH EFFORTS MADE TO DOCUMENT STRUGGLE OF UMNO VETERANS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 18 (Bernama) -- Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed regrets that not much efforts have been made to document the experience and struggle of Umno veterans.

"Because of that we've lost half of the history of the struggle of our party for the benefit of the future generation," he said when launching the biography of Umno permanent chairman, Tun Sulaiman Ninam Shah in conjunction with the Umno general assembly here.

The 298-page book on the life of Sulaiman, an Umno member since the party's formation in 1946, took three years to complete. Published by Utusan Publications and Distributors Sdn Bhd, the biography was compiled by Harun Johari and Datuk Wan Mahyuddin Wan Nawang.

Dr Mahathir said that by documenting the history of the struggle of these Umno veterans, party members could benefit from their valuable experience in the next 100 to 1,000 years to come.

He said such books would be sought after by those wanting to know about the history of this country.

"The personal experience of these party veteran is invaluable because indirectly the future generation will be able to know about the political struggle in the country," he said.

As such, Dr Mahathir said the time had come to record such invaluable experience as many Umno veterans are still alive and with the party.

He said many notes concerning the country leaders could not be preserved in time or recorded and when they died, their personal experience and history of their struggle would be lost.

"I hope family members of prominent figures would keep whatever notes and records they have to facilitate documentation of their lives in future," he said.

Dr Mahathir cited as an example an uncle of his who would record events in his life but the records were lost because his family did not value it.

"I'm fortunate in the sense that my staff keep materials and document the developments surrounding my life or else these materials will be lost," he said.

The Galeria Perdana in Langkawi has a collection of over 3,000 souvenirs received by the Prime Minister and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah.

Dr Mahathir said that nowadays such task would be easier with the help of audio and visual technology.

"We only need an expert to ask questions to help person concerned to relate the details of his experience," he said.

He suggested that efforts be made to interview prominent people in various fields now when they are still healthy before they become old and senile.

"I think the biography of Tun (Sulaiman) will be read not only by those who want to know about him but also those who want to know about events during the Umno general assemblies in the past," he said.

Sulaiman meanwhile told reporters he planned to quit as Umno permanent chairman, a post he held for 27 years.

"It is better to hand over the post to another person," said the 83-year-old veteran whose terms will end next year.

But he said he would hold on to the post if Umno president extended his term to 2004.

To a question, Sulaiman said he joined Umno in 1946 because there was no other party which could safeguard the special privilege of the Malays at the time.

He said his most bitter experience was when Umno was declared unlawful by the court in 1987.

-- BERNAMA

BD HIS HK MOZ ABG