

05 JUL 2003

Mahathir-Sulaiman

DR MAHATHIR SAYS UMNO VALUES SULAIMAN'S SERVICE

PETALING JAYA, July 5 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad paid tribute to Umno's longest-serving permanent chairman Tun Sulaiman Ninam Shah who died of leukaemia early today.

"He had a full life. He worked until his last days practically," the prime minister told reporters after he and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, paid their last respects at Sulaiman's residence, here.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said Sulaiman had done a great service to Umno and the party valued his service.

"He is almost an institution in Umno as the longest-serving permanent chairman of the party," he said.

Sulaiman, 83, died at the Pantai Medical Centre at 5am. His remains will be buried in his hometown Muar, Johor, this afternoon.

Sulaiman, who joined Umno in 1947, had been its permanent chairman for the last 28 years.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, described Sulaiman's death as a great loss to the nation.

He said Sulaiman had contributed a lot to Umno and had been actively involved in its struggle since the early days of the party's formation.

"Umno has lost a likeable member who is highly respected for his integrity, especially when he was the party's permanent chairman," said the Umno deputy president who later left for Muar to attend the funeral.

Umno vice-presidents Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Tan Sri Muhammad Muhamad Taib were among the leaders who paid their last respects to Sulaiman at his residence, here.

Others included former deputy prime minister Tan Sri Musa Hitam and Wanita Umno permanent chairman Tan Sri Aishah Ghani.

Muhyiddin and Muhammad said Umno had lost a leader who had contributed a lot to the party.

"He was a true Umno member...we have lost a champion of the race and his death is a big loss to the Malays, Umno and the country," said Muhyiddin, who is Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister.

Muhammad said Sulaiman had livened up the Umno general assembly each year with his wit and it would be difficult to find his replacement.

Aishah said that Sulaiman's absence from the Umno general assembly last month due to failing health was conspicuous because he had been its permanent chairman for so long.

"May God bless his soul," she said.

Umno veteran Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen, who was also present, said Sulaiman's death was a great loss for Umno.

"I remember him because he was the first person to meet me when I started work at the Muar sessions court," he said.

MIC president Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu said Sulaiman's death was a great loss to Umno and the country.

"He was a leader who was able to maintain unity in the party," he said in a statement here.

Samy Vellu, who is Works Minister, described Sulaiman as a humble person.

In MUAR, another Umno vice-president, Seri Najib Tun Razak, said Sulaiman was very committed to Umno's cause and was a symbol of the party's struggle for the religion, race and country.

Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said Sulaiman was a leader

who always went down to the ground and was never tired of working for the party.

In KOTA BAHARU, Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah said Sulaiman's death was a loss not only to Umno but also to the Malay business world because he had worked hard to increase the participation of the Malays in trade and industry.

In KOTA KINABALU, Sabah Chief Minister Menteri Datuk Musa Aman joined the other leaders in extending his condolences to Sulaiman's family.

Umno secretary-general Umno Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, who was in Kota Kinabalu, said Umno members would feel the loss of Sulaiman during the party's general assembly.

The Information Minister said Sulaiman had a unique voice and tone which was effective for conducting the proceedings.

"He made a obvious impact when conducting the assembly," he said.

-- BERNAMA

SR AZZ MNY RAR JS JK