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Mahathir-Country

NEVER SURRENDER THE COUNTRY, SAYS DR M

PUTRAJAYA, June 12 (Bernama) -- In a call for Malaysians to keep up the fighting spirit of Umno's founding father Datuk Onn Ja'afar, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysians must never surrender their country to anybody even by an inch.

"We must not surrender anything to anybody. This is your only country and if you surrender, then of course you will have no country of your own," the Prime Minister said when launching a book on Datuk Onn Ja'afar entitled "Reflections of Pre-Independence Malaya," here.

In recounting how Malay states at one time came to be under British rule, he said, the Malays "were glad" at that time when the British took over the country's administration.

"I've always complained about how the Malays like to take the easy way out," he said, adding that it took a man like Datuk Onn to realise the need for the country to become independent and for the locals to manage the country themselves.

Dr Mahathir said: "Never give anything away, not even the size of a cow hide. It may look small but people can have their way of making it much bigger."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians could well learn the lesson from that part of the country's history, for there was a saying which admonishes that those who forget history would be punished.

"We do not want to repeat our past mistakes. We should know what we should reject," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Onn was the first Malay man who led a nationwide struggle against the British.

However, Dr Mahathir said the then Umno leader was deemed to be going too fast when he suggested that Umno be opened to other races as well.

This, he said, was not acceptable for Umno members then and because of the differences, Onn had to leave the party in what to his mind (Dr Mahathir's mind) was the first case of a splinter group of Umno.

Telling the audience that PAS was also a splinter group of Umno, Dr Mahathir said he wished that there would be no more such breakaway acts.

He also said those who have done something significant should try to record it -- a task made easier now with the existence of tape recorders -- for the benefit of future generations.

The Prime Minister said he found that historians were not that keen to record the chronicles of important persons, including the country's first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj.

"When Tunku was still around, I urged a few people to talk to him about his experiences but there was no real effort towards that," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the future generation of Malaysians need to learn and understand history so that they would continue the struggle for the sake of the country and themselves.

The 196-page book was a recollection of author Datuk Mohamed Abid's memories of Onn and the times he lived in.

He grew up as a member of the extended family of Onn and whose daughter Mastisa Hani is the wife of Dr Mahathir's son, Datuk Mokhzani.

In his speech, Mohamed Abid said it was the strength of Onn's character that enabled him to get the Malays to put aside their parochial loyalties to their individual states and come together under Umno to oppose the formation of the Malaysian Union.

Onn was born in 1895 and died in 1962. His son was Malaysia's third Prime Minister Tun Hussein Onn while his grandson is the current Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein.

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