

25/11/2004

Dr M visits branch where he made debut

PENDANG, Wed. - It was a walk down memory lane for former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he visited the Kampung Charok Kudong Umno branch - the place where he made his political debut.

He was reunited with veteran members of the branch, including its 78-year-old co-founder, Awang Md Saman, who was instrumental in persuading him to come to Kampung Charok Kudong.

Dr Mahathir had transferred his membership from the Alor Star branch to Kampung Charok Kudong, called Charok Kudong in 1964, and subsequently contested and won the Kota Selatan parliamentary seat in the general election the same year.

"It is a sentimental visit for me. These people persuaded me to transfer my membership and it was here that I first contested the elections," he said after attending the branch Hari Raya gathering.

He was accompanied by his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

Dr Mahathir served as Kota Star Selatan MP until 1969, when he was defeated. He later moved back to the Alor Star branch before transferring his membership to Jitra.

Awang, who founded the branch with Abdul Manaf Abdullah, said it was difficult to persuade Dr Mahathir to transfer his membership.

"He was a learned man, while we were just ordinary kampung folk. In the end, he relented when Abdul Manaf said that he had a responsibility to his constituency," Awang said.

And Dr Mahathir affirmed this, saying that the people of Charok Kudong had persuaded him to identify with the Kota Star Selatan constituency.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said he would also ask one of his children, who is not yet an Umno member, to consider becoming a member of the branch.

"But I'll tell them not to be overtly ambitious and start campaigning to become branch chief. They can just visit the branch once in while and take part in its activities," he said.

(END)