

Historian: Compilation basis for comparison

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — The compilation of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's writings published in *The Early Years 1947-1972*, provides a perspective and basis for comparison of the Prime Minister's views currently and during his early days.

Historian Datuk Dr Khoo Kay Kim said Dr Mahathir's articles showed that his actions during the last decade were aimed at addressing basically the same problems.

The only difference was that during that period, Dr Mahathir talked about pos-

sible prescriptions for the ills he saw while now he was administering them.

Khoo said Dr Mahathir had shown no reason to veer away from the goals set for the future by himself.

The book provides a meaningful guide to make general predictions, he said.

He said some world leaders made pledges and policy statements from time to time but these were not always pragmatic.

"The essays under review provide a useful insight into Dr Mahathir's thoughts during the formative years of his adult life," he said dur-

ing a discussion on the book held after its launch by Economic Adviser to the Government Tun Daim Zainuddin at Balai Berita.

Khoo said Dr Mahathir was not an activist when students of University of Malaya (then in Singapore) attempted to organise themselves into a pressure group.

He said the group was inclined to the left, then to the right, agitating together with political and labour activists outside the campus.

He said, however, Dr Mahathir was by no means insensitive to the turmoil of the immediate post-war

years.

"Without being part of the crowd, he was nevertheless agitating for reform and publicly expressing his thoughts in response to major issues," he said.

Khoo chaired the panel discussion comprising educationist Tan Sri Awang Had Salleh and Universiti Malaya's history department lecturer Prof Madya Muhammad Abu Bakar.

Muhammad said the book gave a glimpse of the Malay generation during that period with Dr Mahathir being a critical observer.

He, however, felt that the

Prime Minister did not show any ideological traits in those early years.

"I get the feeling that he never liked to announce his political ambitions early," he said, adding that the book was an invaluable contribution to students trying to understand the Prime Minister's thoughts.

Awang Had said Dr Mahathir was a visionary and the writings were the beginning of his vision.

"The writing reflected his boldness and courage in dealing with the issues," he said.