

# 'Don't overlook Rukunegara'

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## Salleh: It's the spirit which binds the people together

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Rukunegara was not plucked from the air, declared Tun Dr Salleh Abas, one of the elders who helped draft the National Philosophy in 1970.

"All in the (Federal) Constitution; nothing new taken and nothing was plucked from the air," he said in an interview with Bernama TV in a documentary titled *Rukun Negara: A Nation United*, which will be aired on TV from Aug 31 to Sept 19.

"... the actual writing and drafting was done by me," beamed Salleh, who was the solicitor-general then.

He later became Lord President (now Chief Justice) of the then Supreme Court (now Federal Court).

Salleh, who turns 91 on Aug 25, recalled that the members of the Rukunegara drafting committee considered all the religions of the people of Malaysia and all the provisions of the Federal Constitution.

He said "Belief in God" was placed as the first principle taking into consideration Articles 3 and 11 of the Constitution.

Article 3 (1) says Islam is the religion of the Federation but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation, while Article 11 (1) says every person has the right to profess and practise his religion, he explained.

Salleh said this became the basis for harmony among Malaysians in the aftermath of the racial riots of May 13, 1969.

He said it was not an easy task, especially to find the best way to unite the multiracial people in this



country, adding that the result or effect can be seen in the peace that has been maintained until today.

"Rukunegara should be regarded as the spirit which binds the people together and not just (something) to make Malaysia a place where people earn a living, make their riches and return to their country of origin.

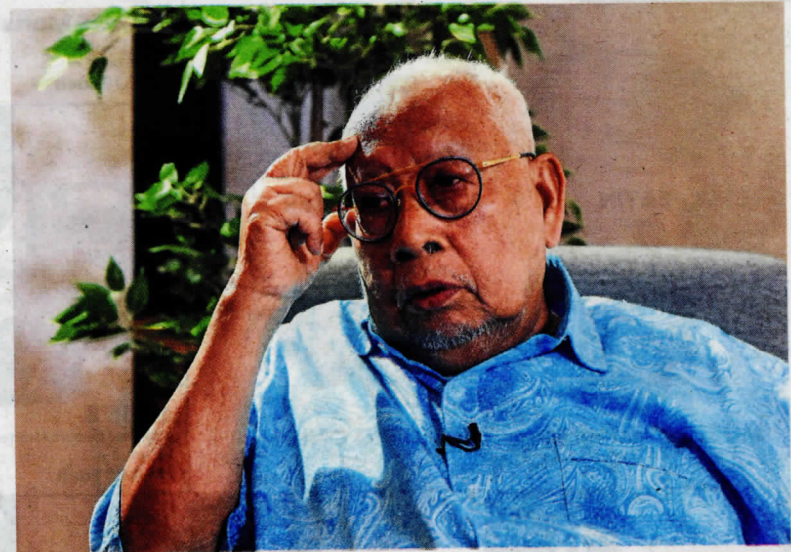
"Now, we want them to remain and build this country so that you can see what it is today," he said at his home in Setiawangsa here.

The Rukunegara was proclaimed on Aug 31, 1970, by the fourth Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ismail Nasiruddin Shah Ibnu Almarhum Sultan Zainal Abidin.

Salleh emphasised that the Rukunegara should be the spirit that makes the people realise how important it is to maintain harmony among the three major races and others in the country.

He recalled that several people, including then home minister Tun Ghazali Shafie, were involved in drafting the Rukunegara 50 years ago.

It is gleaned from archival information that others who helped draft the Rukunegara included Tun Tan Siew Sin, Tan Sri Leonard



**Recalling the past:** Salleh remembering that it was a challenge drafting the Rukunegara just after the racial riots in 1969. He is part of the documentary titled 'Rukun Negara: A Nation United'. — Bernama

Linggi Jugah, Tan Sri Kamarul Ariffin, Datuk Harun Idris and Tan Sri Aishah Ghani.

Salleh recalled that it was a challenge drafting the Rukunegara as the committee members of the National Operations Council (NOC), which was set up to restore peace and stability after the riots, had to come up with ideas on how to bring the people together again.

"There were very tense moments (for me).

"I was called by Inspector-General of Police at that time (Tun Mohamed Salleh Ismael).

"He said: 'tengoklah (see), every 10 minutes we have reports coming

in (of) rumah terbakar dan gaduh-gaduh' (houses on fire and commotions)."

Asked what he felt about people's views of the Rukunegara now compared to the past, Salleh said because the people were enjoying peace now, there was a tendency for them to forget the national philosophy.

"They take it for granted as it is there but never bother to look back and see how it was drafted, why it was drafted, why it should be there.

"You don't find it in the Constitution, but the Rukunegara is in accordance with the Constitution," he said. — Bernama