

Reminiscing on Tun Hussein Onn: A Book Lover

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As the first chairman of ISIS Malaysia, Tun Hussein Onn had a significant impact on the development of ISIS. When ISIS first began operations, it was housed on the fifth and ninth floors of the then Asian Pacific and Development Centre (APDC) building at Pesiaran Duta. It was through the efforts of Tun that we were given the bungalow that ISIS is housed in today.

My personal encounters with the Tun have been very memorable ones. 'Reading was his favourite pastime since his youth and he once said, "I love to read books on politics, sometimes war stories. However, I am not very interested in books on love stories."'* I could see this interest first-hand when he was Chairman of ISIS.

When the ISIS Library was established at the current premises, Tun would often visit. He would seat himself in the corner where the political history books were and he would browse through the shelves picking up the books that he liked.

The Library was newly established then and was not stocked with many books. I would regularly source for him books on politics and world events and especially of World War I and II. I got the books mainly from the University of Malaya Library. It became routine for me to borrow books for him. While initially the task was quite easy, later, I had to ensure that I did not borrow the same titles by mistake and had to browse longer and among many more bookshelves in the UM Library.

On some occasions, Tun would sit in the Chairman's room looking through the books I had



Tun Hussein Onn

borrowed for him. He would quite often tell me what he had read, his views and comments on certain books and why he agreed or disagreed with some of the authors' views.

Although Tun was a former Prime Minister, he was a very approachable man, with no airs about him. He may have been soft-spoken but he spoke with great wisdom, as an elder statesman. Tun was truly respected and appreciated.

* www.pmo.org