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HANG TUAH - THE NATION'S WARRIOR OF THE MALAY WORLD



PENANG, 15 October 2016 - Hang Tuah is the warrior of the Malay world who needs to be immortalised in the minds of the masses. Based on various references including from the great literary works such as 'Hikayat Hang Tuah' and 'Sulalat al-Salatin', Hang Tuah was truly a figure befitting such descriptions.

According to a Professor in Literature from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Professor Dato' Seri Md. Salleh Yaapar, all of the world's major races and cultures have their own heroic figures, who may not necessarily be living beings but they fit the characteristics as the superior icon of a particular group.

He said that, a cultural icon thrives beyond space and time, has universal appeal and would always remain in the psyche and memories of a cultural group to spur them ahead.

"Every major race and culture has its own cultural hero passed down the generations through stories which were read, repeated, sustained, and upheld to instil a sense of pride and self-worth which is priceless."

"Every race in the East and the West having a sense of pride would take this path for their cultural hero to become a factor that could portray their sense of pride while defending their self-worth over time, and space," stressed Md. Salleh.

He was presenting his views in the forum entitled 'Hang Tuah Dalam Wacana Mutakhir' (Contemporary Discourse on Hang Tuah) organised by the Kelab Sastera dan Kelab Sejarah USM (USM Arts and History Club) here recently, which was attended by close to 300 people including students, who filled the Hall.



He further stressed that, based on the publications and research on his character which touched on his bravery, wisdom and loyalty, Hang Tuah befits the mould of a Malay cultural figure and there is still a lot that needs to be done to glorify him.

Hang Tuah was said to be well-versed in 12 languages, and his bravery went across continents - Rome, India and China among other countries, having acquired in-depth knowledge both worldly and spiritually and being truly loyal and faithful towards his Ruler.

Earlier on, the academician and researcher from the Malay Language Department, Faculty of Modern Languages & Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Professor Emeritus Dr. Hashim Musa discussed his research findings, which confirmed that Hang Tuah had really existed and was said to be in his eighties when Malacca was invaded by the Portuguese, based on evidences found in Japan and Portugal through his work entitled 'Hang Tuah Wira Bangsa Wujud dalam Sejarah' (Hang Tuah the Cultural Hero Evident in History).

Also in the panel was the former academician on History from the USM School of Humanities, Abdul Rahman Ismail who presented a few critical facts from the historical perspective on the issue, by looking at the name used, designation, characteristics, time records, figure and a few other criteria, especially in referring to the different versions of 'Sulalat Al-Salatin' or 'Sejarah Melayu'.

The discourse which was chaired by former academician from the USM School of Distance Education, Dr. Ahmad Jelani Halimi concluded that although there are many interpretations from the historical perspective based on evidences, many of the narrations need to be interpreted more accurately, while agreeing and accepting the fact that Hang Tuah had actually existed.

"It would be unreasonable to have differing opinions disputing his existence, even though that were different interpretations based on publications and writings from many places such as in Indonesia, Japan, China, India and even in this country," said Md. Salleh on the issue.

He further emphasised that, there is still a lot to be done to bring this cultural hero to life, even from the historical context, although in Indonesia such an effort has long been made, which include naming a university in his name that offers maritime studies, namely the Universitas Hang Tuah Surabaya.

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