

12 OCT 1996

Umno-Mahathir (Reserves)

MALAY RESERVE LAND DOES NOT REFLECT MALAY DOMINANCE, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today chided Malays who claim that Malay reserve land is a reflection of Malay dominance and influence in the country.

He said that the existence of Malay reserves actually reflected the backwardness of the Malays in their own homeland.

Although it was still necessary to have Malay reserve land, he said, the Malays should strive to strengthen their economy so that they could be on par with the non Malays and would no longer require Malay reserve land as a form of protection.

"I do not deny that it is necessary because we are not yet very strong in the economic aspect...that is why we need to have Malay reserves.

"But we should not have too much pride in the Malay reserves. It is not a reflection of our dominance, it is not a reflection of our influence, it actually shows that we are a backward race," he said when winding up the debate on the final day of the Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

The Umno president said that what was important was the capability of the Malays and Bumiputeras to strengthen their economic position to afford to acquire land anywhere, whether within or outside the Malay reserves.

"Today, we have somewhat attain such capability because we found Malays who are successful in the economic field being able to acquire property from the non Malays.

"When we have reached a stage where the value of Malay reserve land has increased so much because some Malays are able to buy the land, then it may no longer be necessary to have Malay reserve land.

"We should not attach too much sentiment on Malay reserve land. It does not make us any more respectable, it is an insult to us in our our country," he said.

Referring to the Red Indian reserves in the United States, Dr Mahathir said that it did not mean that the Red Indians were the lords in their country but a sign of their insignificance and to be gawked at by tourists.

"We do not want to be Red Indians in our own country," he said.

He said that he was embarrassed that Kampung Baru, in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, was in a sorry state although surrounded by high-rise buildings frequented by tourists.

"We do not want it to be a yardstick for the achievement of the Malays. Actually, Malays who are better off do not stay there anymore. They buy land outside Malay reserves," he said.

He said that the government planned to redevelop Kampung Baru but the landowners should give their cooperation.

"Some of the landowners there have agreed to sell at a reasonable price but the majority do not want to sell or could not sell because of loss of ownership due to deaths," he said.

However, he hoped that the problem could be overcome with the cooperation between the landowners and Malay and Bumiputera entrepreneurs who could afford to buy the land at a fair price.

"Actually, those who own land in Kampung Baru could get more than 1,000 per cent profit from the sale of the land but they want more," he said. --

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