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Mahathir-Malays

MALAYS ARE TOLERANT BECAUSE THEY LIKE EXPEDIENCE, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 2 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Malays in Malaysia are very tolerant because they like expedience and history shows that they preferred the good life to security issues and the progress of their race.

He said that even before Melaka fell to the Portuguese, the Malays had shown their tolerance to immigrants and during the British rule they preferred to retreat from the towns, which were developed and occupied by the immigrants, and give up most of the economic activities to the immigrants.

"If during the time of the Melaka Malay sultanate the rulers became traders and exchanged the forest produce and tin ore collected by their subjects for foreign merchandise, during the time when foreigners monopolised the towns the Malay rulers were content to turn over the land and tax collection to the foreigners because of the assurance of a higher income," he said.

The Malay rulers had also given the monopoly of the opium trade and the collection of import tax to the Chinese "kapitans" who ensured that the tax revenue reached the hands of the rulers, he said in his keynote address entitled "Tolerance -- the Malaysian Model" at the Malaysian Institute of Islamic Understanding (Ikim) here.

This was because when the taxes were collected by Malay officials, a large portion of it did not reach the rulers, he said.

"Clearly, the Malays were tolerant because they liked expedience. If others could do the work for them, they were prepared to accept them into their state.

"They did not mix with these foreigners, (they) only allowed them there to do the work that they disliked," he said.

The prime minister said the Malays also did not get involved with or learn from the immigrants in the various fields like mining, retail and wholesale trade, carpentry and house construction, sewing, ironworks, office work and working on trains.

The willingness of the Malays to leave all the work to foreigners had resulted in the Malay states at one time being havens for immigrants who came in droves until they outnumbered the Malays.

"If not for the severe recession of the 20s and 30s which caused many of the immigrants to return to their homeland, the number of Malays in the Malay states would have continued to be less than that of the foreigners, like in Singapore," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the tolerance of the Malays was extraordinary but it was not done out of concern for the other races.

It was due to the facilities and quality service provided by the others which the Malays enjoyed.

"The tolerance of the Malays was due to expedience because it eased their burden. They were prepared to be tolerant because they could have comfort without too much hassle.

"That they were made poorer by the immigrants did not bother them. The important thing for them was that their burden was reduced," he said.

The prime minister said that if not for the laws prohibiting the sale of Malay-owned land to the immigrants, most of the Malays today would probably be squatting on other people's land because they would probably have sold their land and spent the money on goods and services provided by

the immigrants.
-- BERNAMA
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