

British 'behaved' like colonialists, says Dr M
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The reality of the British presence in Malaya was that they acted like colonialists, said former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Mahathir agreed with National Professors Council member Zainal Kling's statement that Malaya was never colonised by the British, but stressed that the reality was that the sultans ended up working on the orders of the British.

"We were technically never colonised. What we did was the sultans decided to invite the British to come and advise them on how to administer the country. We were not conquered in that sense.

"Just like Penang, we were paid to give them a kind of trading station... But the fact remains that when the British were here, they operated as if we were colonised.

"In other words, the British did not advise, they gave orders," he told a press conference after the launch of the Perdana University in Serdang today.

Last week, Zainal had argued that Malaya had never been a British colony but a "protectorate", stressing that no document since the Pangkor Treaty 1874 states that Malaya would be colonised.

Zainal said only Singapore, Malacca and Penang had been colonised over the past 400 years, with the exception of the period between 1946 and 1947, when Malaya was under Japanese occupation during World War II.

The entire argument over Malayan history stemmed from a controversial statement allegedly made by PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu (left), who was reported to have praised communist insurgents involved in the deadly siege of the Bukit Kepong police station in 1950. It left 25 people dead including 14 police officers and a few of their wives who took up arms.

Mat Sabu, as Mohamad is better known, has since threatened to sue Umno-owned Malay daily Utusan Malaysia for the report, saying that his statement was "heavily distorted" to slander him and PAS.

'Don't invent history'

Mahathir, who turns 86 this year, stressed that it is important for "people" to avoid "inventing" history, though he did not make it clear to which group he was referring.

"I went through this period, from the time under British rule, the Japanese, Thai, then the British military and civilian administration, and then independent Malaysia.

"I practically observed history moving before my eyes, and I find people making statements that are not really relevant, not really factual. I think it is necessary that they don't invent history and stick to the facts of history."

Mahathir, who was well-known for antagonising Western powers when he was prime minister, however hinted that Malaysians should not forget British conduct while they were acting as "advisors" to Malaya.

"Such is the English language, where the advisors rule and the rulers advise. (Look at) the Commonwealth, the wealth is not common because the wealth is only compiled by a few countries," he quipped.

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