

Malaysia was colonised, admits DPM Muhyiddin
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Amidst polemics on whether or not the country was colonised by the British, Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin told the Dewan Rakyat today that he believes that Malaysia was indeed a British colony.

Muhyiddin Yassin and education minister Azmin Ali were asked "Have we been colonised? Yes! We have been celebrating our independence every year. It can't be for nothing," he said, replying a supplementary question from Azmin Ali (PKR- Gombak) during the Question session.

Muhyiddin said that, while some argue that the Malay sultans only received 'advice' from the British, he is of the opinion that they were under the de facto, if not direct control, of the British Crown.

"They received advice from the British residents, but the advice must be accepted. They (the sultans) are not free (to rule)," he argued.

Azmin also asked Muhyiddin, the education minister, if there are any plans to include the "philosophy of history" as a subject in schools, as opposed to just merely educating students on historical facts.

Muhyiddin replied that historical facts are by and large consistent, but that the interpretation of the facts - or the philosophy and understanding of history - could differ, leading to misunderstanding.

As such, the interpretation of history should be done by experts and not by laymen and politicians, he said.

Muhyiddin said a committee is in place to ensure that the subject encompasses facts and the right interpretation to enrich students' understanding of history.

He earlier replied Shamsul Anwar Nasarah (BN-Lenggong) about government initiatives to study and review historical facts in the national education system, saying that a committee is reviewing the history syllabus.

To improve students' grasp of history, the subject will be introduced earlier in the school system, from Year 4. This will be implemented in stages, he added.

Not 'colonised', just 'protected'

The debate on whether or not Malaysia had been colonised by the British came to a head after the National Professors Council chief Zainal Kling (right) claimed that Malaysia had only been a "protectorate" of the British.

He based this on the fact that no document since the Pangkor Treaty 1874 states that Malaya would be colonised.

"Being a protectorate is not the same as being colonised... Only three states were colonised - Singapore, Malacca and Penang... Stop saying (Malaya) was colonised for 400 years. That is a big mistake," he had said.

Zainal said Malaya was only colonised for two years as the Malayan Union, from early 1946 to the end of 1947, as well as while under Japanese Occupation.

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