

## **LETTER | Mat Kilau has tendency to promote hatred against minorities**

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**Malaysian Gurdwaras Council**

LETTER | The Malaysian Gurdwaras Council (MGC) had received complaints from some Sikh Gurdwara Committee members about the film 'Mat Kilau'. As a responsible organisation, the MGC president and secretary saw the film on July 6 before any action was taken.

The film appears to rally Nationalism amongst the Malays. The common theme that runs through the film is the fight for 'bangsa dan agama' and for 'Tanah Melayu'. This, itself, is not wrong.

However, the non-Malay characters were painted as barbaric and evil. The film shows Sikh soldiers who were employed by the British army brutally attacking and maiming women, children and the elderly.

In one scene, a Sikh soldier was shown mercilessly kicking an expectant mother who was in an advanced stage of pregnancy. Since, throughout the film, only Sikh soldiers were shown, this has resulted in the Sikh soldiers being seen as barbaric.

However, history showed that the Sikhs never laid their hands on women, children, or the elderly.

During the Mughal rule in India, the Sikhs fought oppression in the form of Afghanistan's Ahmad Shah Abdali, who had invaded India a few times to plunder, and took along hundreds, sometimes thousands, of girls as slaves.

It is recorded history that when the Sikhs confronted Ahmad Shah's forces when they were returning to Afghanistan, they would free the girls and send them home honourably.

In a more recent example, during the Kashmir riots about two years ago, a curfew was imposed throughout the territory. Some 30 Muslim college girls took shelter in a Gurdwara along with others and asked for help to be sent home as they were from other states.

The Sikhs arranged for their transport, and put their own lives in danger by personally sending the girls back to their homes safely. This was reported in major Indian and Pakistani newspapers, and there were photos of the girls' reunion with their families on Al Jazeera.

As reported: "They were welcomed by volunteers from the Sikh community, who

fed them, gave them shelter in a Sikh temple (Gurdwara) and arranged transport for them to go back to their homes.”

“The Sikh volunteers gave us food and accommodation and arranged 13 vehicles for more than 100 of us to go home together, Shabad said”.

The way nationalism was promoted in Mat Kilau can cause division in a multi-racial country like Malaysia. It has the tendency to promote ill-will against the minorities as they were shown as barbaric oppressors in the film.

The filmmakers should have been more responsible and portrayed history truthfully and not add fiction to portray the non-Malays as barbaric and inhumane. Ethnic minorities can be easy targets if the feelings of the majority were aroused due to misinformation contained in the film.

History books also show that even though the rebellion was led by Tok Gajah, Mat Kilau, Dato Bahaman, etc against the British, their enemies were assisted by some Malay chiefs and even sultans.

In Serambi Dakwah (June 5, 2009), it was stated: “Unfortunately, the sultan himself welcomed their (British) arrival, having been taken in by their convincing promises”.

In the book 'The Sikh Police Contingent' by Karam Singh PBS, it was recorded: "In January 1891, Tengku Mahmud (the sultan's eldest son and the regent) with about 200 followers and the British with 60 Sikh police officers, erected two stockades in the Semantan area against the rebels. In May 1892, Tengku Ali (the sultan's second son) with 300 men captured Batu Hempar, killing one of Bahaman's sons."

These examples show that it was not a Malay versus non-Malay fight as portrayed by the film. Many Malay leaders had joined the British when Mat Kilau and the rebels fought against taxation.

The filmmakers should understand that we are living in a multi-racial country and that there is no colonial master anymore. Malays are no longer colonised and are in power. Thus, the theme of the film is out of place, especially when it was claimed to be fiction.

This is a disservice to the nation and we call upon the filmmakers to not produce films that are historically wrong and have a tendency to sow division among the races.

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