

'No racial politics' - Dr M emulates Lennon with his own 'Imagine'

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Dr Mahathir Mohamad has taken a page out of John Lennon's book, or rather song, to envisage a Malaysia devoid of racial politics.

While the late British singer envisioned a world without religion, possession or borders as in his hit song 'Imagine', the 98-year-old former premier's imagination was rooted in racial and cultural assimilation instead.

In a Facebook post titled "Imagine", the former premier, who has been spewing a deluge of unsubstantiated allegations against the non-Malays, recalled his school days in the 1930s.

"I went to the government English school in Alor Setar (Kedah)... My classmates were of different races. There were Malays, Chinese, Indians, Eurasians and Sikhs.

"I developed a friendship with them. One, in particular, was a close friend. He was Chinese. He was the son of Lee Ewe Boon, the Kedah state treasurer at that time. The state treasurer not only spoke Malay but he could write and read the Jawi

script," he said.

According to Mahathir, most Chinese spoke Malay as their mother tongue before the British colonised Singapore and Penang.

"Their way of life also changed. The women wore sarong and kebaya labuh. They no longer had small feet. The men no longer had pigtails (tocang). They were called Baba and Nyonya," said.

Mahathir said the influx of Chinese and Indian migrants outnumbered the Baba and Nyonya under the British.

He said these Chinese migrants did not see the need to adopt the Baba Nyonya culture.

"They remained very Chinese, speaking Chinese dialects, staying largely within their own communities. They went into business aggressively and they prospered.

"Their politics were about China. They supported the movement to overthrow the Manchu dynasty in China by Sun Yat-sen. They raised lots of money for this struggle. Unfortunately, they also persuaded the Babas and Nyonyas to become Chinese again, to speak Chinese," he added.

Mahathir then imagined how Malaysia would have been if all the people of Chinese descent spoke Malay as their home language, retained some of the cultures of the Baba and Nyonya of old and went to national schools.

“Like in Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, the United States and Australia, they would be identified solely with their adopted country.

“They would be Indonesians, Thais, Filipinos, Americans and Australians. They are not identified as Indonesian Chinese, Filipino Chinese, Thai Chinese, American Chinese or Australian Chinese.

“They would go to national schools and mix with Malays and bumiputera. No racial politics,” he added.

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