

## **Johor still a British colony if not for the federation: Dr M to TMJ**

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It is inappropriate for Johor Regent Tunku Ismail Ibrahim to suggest a separation of powers between the state and the federation, said former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Reflecting on the history of when Johor signed an agreement to hand over administrative powers to the British, Mahathir reminded that Johor would remain a British colony today if not for the federation.

“Johor would continue to be a colonial state and not independent.

“We established the federation so that wealthy states could help the poorer states.

“Initially, all states were poor, including Johor. Then, after gaining independence, Johor became wealthy and didn’t want to share its resources with poorer states, which is not acceptable.

“Sarawak doesn’t deny sharing its wealth either. It just asks for a little more, and we provide it,” he said at a press conference at the Perdana Leadership Foundation in Putrajaya today.

The former prime minister was commenting on Tunku Ismail’s statement that Johor is not a “beggar state” that needs to beg for the state’s needs and development.

In a live podcast on June 9, he raised the issue that the state’s needs and interests are only addressed during election season.

Therefore, Tunku Ismail, who is also the Johor crown prince, suggested that there should be a separation of powers between the state and the federation.

He also proposed the creation of the Gabungan Bangsa Johor (Johor Citizens Coalition) which, he said, would allow the state’s interests to be decided by its residents, similar to Sarawak.

Commenting further, Mahathir reminded that Johor was the first state to sign the MacMichael Agreement of 1945, which handed the state over to the British.

Through the agreement, all powers were transferred to the British, except for the administration of Islamic religion and Malay customs, which remained under the

Malay rulers.

He said the agreement was successfully annulled when Malays across the peninsula united to form Umno, which opposed and rejected the MacMichael Agreement and the Malayan Union.

“This is how, when all Malays from all states united, the British were forced to bow to their demands. The demand of the Malays was for the Federation of Malaya to replace the Malayan Union.

“The rulers were also reinstated as constitutional monarchs in a parliamentary democracy,” he added.

Harold Alfred MacMichael was a British administrator authorised to sign official agreements with the Malay rulers on the proposed Malayan Union scheme beginning in 1945, upon the return of the British to Malaya in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.

Sultan Ibrahim of Johor was the first Malay ruler to agree. Through the agreement, the United Kingdom had full administrative power over the Malay states, except for matters related to Malay customs and the Islamic religion.

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