

Malays let themselves to be colonised again
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Bede Hong

Dr Mahathir Mohamad stepped up his criticisms against the government today, arguing that the country is bowing to Singapore's demands, and that leaders would rather play golf to appease foreigners than defend the nation's sovereignty.

Stating that Johor is losing its independence by allowing the free trade Iskandar Development Region to continue, he said Malays are allowing themselves to be colonised by foreign powers again, this time by the Israelis.

The former premier's main contention was the government greenlighting the free trade area, which allows land ownership by foreign companies. He said Singapore would take advantage of such a situation.

"Foreigners can come in without using their passports. They can build skyscrapers which could be owned by anyone," he said during a public forum organised by Umno Kulai Besar branch. This was his first Umno-invited function of the year.

"Who would come in? We all know that Singapore would. Even the Israelis can come in. They have an embassy in Singapore... They call me anti-Semitic, but it is a fact that anyone can come in," he said to an audience of 500. The forum was entitled 'Malay leadership in the era of globalisation'.

He said if Singapore had been mostly populated by Malays, there might not have been a secession.

"Who knows what would have transpired in the event that the island was populated mostly by Malays ... Now we are surrendering this area to people who can enter without using passports," he said in his two-hour speech, which was also spiced with humour.

Why bridge a necessity

Mahathir said the Malays are under threat of becoming "enslaved" to foreign powers yet again.

"I am not using racialism, but if we surrender our rights, who would come stand for us. Who can we depend on but ourselves," he explained.

He said Malaysia is losing its sovereignty over Johor and that the country's administrators are afraid of "foreigners".

"People have said I voiced my concern because the bridge is my pet project. My baby. Yang mana bukan saya punyan projek (Which is not my pet project?). I have been in office 22 years, a lot has been done," he said.

The former premier explained that the bridge is a necessity because of increasing traffic over the causeway.

"The number of cars are not going to decrease. We have to plan ahead before it becomes a problem. The causeway was constructed in 1927... I'm not sure but I think by now there are a little bit more cars moving across the bridge," he said.

He added that he had sought cooperation from Singapore over the bridge issue, but in vain.

"Twenty-two years in office .. mereka (Singapore) tak layan kita (They never entertained us). Saya pun tepuk belakang (I also pat people in the back). He's (former prime minister Goh Chok Tong) is quite tall.

"But I didn't play golf. I don't know how to play golf. We never came to hugging though," he said.

"Now because we are afraid of them (Singapore), we play golf and pat them in the back," he added.

Mahathir pointed out that the bridge would allow ships to move from Pasir Gudang Port to the Tanjung Pelepas Port.

"Even the water can pass through which would clear up the straits," he said.

"If Tunku (Abdul Rahman) were alive today, he would feel utterly disappointed because we gave up our sovereignty," he said.

Mahathir said the cost of the Centre of Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) had shot from RM800 million to RM1.4 billion.

"It is an increase of RM600 million in cost. This is an example of mismanagement. This is how we save our money," he said sarcastically.

'We have the money'

Later, the former premier also defended the move for increased government expenditure during his tenure.

"The money is there for a purpose. If we just kept the money under a pillow, its value would depreciate eventually," he said.

If the money was not spend on development, he said, "would you prefer us to build houses on tree tops? We can save a lot of money that way, but we would be living in the jungle."

"Believe me, we have the money. From oil," he said, citing Petronas' profit of RM86 billion this year.

He also said the Malays were colonised for 450 years because they did not question the sultanate.

"Whatever the King decreed, we just resigned ourselves to it."

He rehashed Malay politics from the end of World War II onwards, crediting much of the country's progress towards independence to Umno politicians such as Onn Jaafar, Nik Ahmad Kamil and Tunku Abdul Rahman.

He said Umno fought the formation of the Malayan Union because of the public support.

"People deserve the government they get," Mahathir added without any hint of irony.

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