

Malays at 'defining moment' of history
Malaysiakini.com
Jun 15, 2008
Terence Netto

PKR de facto
MCPX

leader Anwar Ibrahim said Malays were at a "defining moment" of history that demanded they "disenthrall" themselves from the colonial discourse that portrayed them as dependent on patronage to survive.

syed husin ali book launch 150608 anwar.jpgAnwar said neo-colonial elements such as Malay-based ruling party Umno promoted this dependence syndrome as an instrument of "political control".

"It's time this myth of dependence is exploded," said Anwar in remarks made at the launch yesterday of the book *The Malays: Their Problems and Future* by Dr Syed Husin Ali, the deputy president of PKR.

The book was first written and published in the late 1970s when Syed Husin was detained under the Internal Security Act following his involvement in mass protests over the impact of depressed rubber prices on the livelihood of smallholders in Baling, Kedah

Those protests led to the detention without trial in December 1974 of university academics like Syed Husin, as well as student activists and youth leaders including Anwar Ibrahim.

syed husin ali book launch 150608 launch.jpgThe *Malays: Their Problems and Future* has been updated in a revised edition that was launched by Anwar in Petaling Jaya before an audience of some 400 people, composed of PKR supporters, members of parliament and state assemblies from the opposition Pakatan Rakyat, ex-Universiti Malaya students of Syed Husin, retired academics, and other close friends of the author.

Anwar, whom Syed Husin tutored at the University Malaya in the late 1960s, said he saw Syed Husin's book in the same vein as *The Myth of the Lazy Native* by the late Dr Syed Hussein Alatas, which attempted to refute the colonial discourse that "brown humanity" was indolent and largely dependent on patrons for economic upliftment.

syed husin ali book launch 150608 guest.jpgThe talent and creativity of the Malays will flourish when the myths of their dependence are exploded," said Anwar referring to the eclectic survey of colonial writers on the conditions of the Malays such as Frank Swettenham, Hugh Clifford and Richard Winstedt.

Instead he welcomed the counter discourse by academics such as Edward Said, Alatas and Syed Husin.

Dr M fails to break away from colonial discourse

Anwar equated Dr Mahathir Mohamad's *The Malay Dilemma* and *Revolusi Mental*, an Umno inspired tract circulated after the May 1969 riots to rationalise affirmative action for the Malays, with the colonial discourse that held Malays to be dependent on patrons for their economic advancement.

He said both Revolusi Mental and Mahathir's book were the works of "surrogates and subalterns" of the colonial mindset.

syed husin ali book launch 150608 speak.jpgAnwar lauded Syed Husin's "strong passion" and "consistency" all these years in espousing the cause of Malay upliftment from poverty.

He said he saw Syed Husin's book when it was first published as a significant departure, much like Alatas' opus, from the conventional wisdom on Malay dependency.

The PKR leader also described his party's Malaysian Economic Agenda as the antidote for this mentality that will not only liberate the Malays, and the non-Muslim bumiputeras of Sabah and Sarawak, but also the Chinese and Indians, from the outdated thinking that has warped the nation.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/84505>