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Dr M: Don't re-invent our history

'It's important to stick to the facts'

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SERDANG: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has chided certain quarters for "inventing" inaccurate views of the country's history without backing them up with facts.

Without revealing names, he said there were those who had been making statements without basis.

"I find there are people who have been making statements which are not really relevant and non-factual.

"So, I think it's necessary that they don't invent history, but stick to the facts of history, instead," he said after launching Perdana Universiti here.

The former prime minister was asked to comment on a recent statement by Prof Datuk Dr Zainal Kling of the National Professors' Council that Malaya was never a British colony.

His statement sparked a debate, with certain quarters claiming otherwise.

On the issue of British colonisation of Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said this was not the case in the strict sense of the word.

"Technically speaking, we were never colonised. The Sultans decided to invite the British to come and advise them on how to

administer the country, and we were never conquered in that sense," he said.

However, he said it was a fact that the British "operated as though we were colonised", adding that the term 'colonised' was a matter of semantics.

"In other words, the British did not advise, they gave orders. The English language is such that the adviser rules and the rulers advise," he added.

Meanwhile, historian Prof Emeritus Tan Sri Dr Khoo Kay Khim backed Prof Zainal's claims, saying that from a legal point of view, Malaya was never colonised.

This is because the country's sovereignty had always remained with the Malay rulers.

"The British were able to take part in the administration of the Malay states as a result of treaties with the Malay rulers.

"They also had certain obligations which they carried out faithfully," he said.

He said the British only colonised the Straits Settlements of Singapore, Penang and Malacca.

Prof Khoo said those born in the Straits Settlements were considered British subjects, while those born in the Malay states were not British subjects.

"That is why the settlements had a Governor and the Malay states had a High Commissioner."