

Dr M says British advisers were rulers
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By Shannon Teoh

SERDANG, Sept 12 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad conceded today that Malaysia was never colonised by the British but insisted that their advisers acted as if they were the rulers instead of the Malay Sultans.

The 85-year-old former prime minister said that the British “acted as if we were colonised” in response to the claim by the National Professors’ Council (MPN) that Malaya, the precursor to Malaysia, was never colonised by Britain and had merely been a protectorate.

“The Sultans decided to invite the British to come and advise them on how to administer the country. We were not conquered in that sense. But the fact remains that when the British were here, they operated as if we were colonised.

“In other words, the British did not advise, they gave orders. The English language is such that the adviser rules and the rulers advise,” Dr Mahathir told reporters after the launch of the Perdana University here.

He expanded on his explanation by adding that according to the British system, “the Speaker in Parliament is not allowed to speak. In the Commonwealth, the wealth is not common but compiled by a few countries.”

The influential Umno leader has repeatedly weighed in on the ongoing debate over Malaysia’s independence effort, before which several Sultans had in the 19th century signed a treaty with the British.

They had effectively given up their political power as they had to act in consultation and with consent of their respective British advisers, known as Residents.

The current furore over Malaysia’s history first started when Utusan Malaysia alleged last month that PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu had said that those who attacked the Bukit Kepong police station during the pre-Merdeka insurgency were freedom fighters.

During the Emergency (1948-1960), communist insurgents had attacked the Bukit Kepong police station on February 23, 1950, killing 25, while the country was still under British rule.

The Malay daily also stated that the PAS leader said the country’s first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj and Umno’s first president Datuk Onn Jaafar were not freedom fighters.

Professor Datuk Dr Zainal Kling, representing the MPN, had fuelled the debate by stating recently that Malaysia was never a British colony.

Dr Mahathir had yesterday urged the government to ensure that historical accuracy be given priority over political expedience as “there were attempts to alter historical facts into fantasy.”

He said today that as he had lived through “British, Japanese and Thai rule and then British

military and civilian administration and then the formation of Malaysia," he found that various parties were making non-factual statements and "inventing history."

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