

State stand on Dr M's proposal, govt urged
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KUALA LUMPUR (Jan 23, 2013): Representatives from some 20 Indian NGOs today called on the government to state its stand on a call by former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to investigate the awarding of citizenship to immigrants during pre-independence Malaya.

WargaAman chairman A. Rajaretinam (*pix*) said that Mahathir's proposal is a "direct insult" to the Indian community, whose ancestors were brought in by the British to work in Malaysia.

"Do not just say 'ignore him (Mahathir)'. Do Umno leaders agree with Mahathir's suggestion? That is the main question," said Rajaretinam during a protest by some 50 representatives from the various NGOs in Brickfields today.

Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin had on Tuesday told an online portal that there is no need for public to focus on Mahathir's allegations, pending completion of an ongoing Royal Commission of Inquiry into the issue of illegal immigrants in Sabah.

Mahathir has come under fire after he admitted last week that foreign immigrants in Sabah were granted citizenship during his tenure as prime minister.

He also claimed that Tunku Abdul Rahman, as the first prime minister, had "done worse" by granting citizenship to one million "unqualified people" in Peninsular Malaysia, mostly comprising of Chinese and Indian nationals.

"My ancestors were not refugees! They came to help develop the country by working in the estates, helping to propel Malaysia until it became one of the largest producers of rubber in the world," stressed Rajaretinam.

He has given Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak, as Umno president, one week to state his stand, failing which the groups will organise a larger protest on Feb 17.

DAP Perak vice-chairman A. Sivanesan also urged authorities to press charges against Mahathir under the Sedition Act 1948 for his statement.

"It appears that there are some people who have immunity and are privileged in this country. They can say and do whatever they like," he claimed, pointing out that authorities are quick to take action when reports are lodged against opposition parties.

Aside from Umno, several other Barisan Nasional component party leaders, had in response to Mahathir, said the issue of pre-independence citizenship has been accepted as a historical fact, and as such, there is no need to reignite a debate on the matter.

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