

Malaysians with citizenship not 'pendatang', says historian

The Malaysian Insider

Oct 1, 2015

By Md Izwan

Malaysians who have been awarded citizenship are not "pendatang", prominent historian Tan Sri Professor Khoo Kay Kim said, adding that the use of the word had been misinterpreted.

Khoo said the phrase "pendatang" could only be applied to those from other countries and not those who have resided in Malaysia for a long period of time and are given citizenship.

"'Pendatang' is a phrase that refers to someone who originates from a different country.

"For example, in this country, if he were a citizen of another country, that makes him a 'pendatang'. But if he has stayed here for a long time and has applied for citizenship, then he is no longer a 'pendatang'. He is a citizen," Khoo told a forum on protecting the Malays' dignity organised by Gabungan Merdeka Rakyat in Kuala Lumpur, last night.

However, Khoo did not touch upon the use of the phrase to refer to a particular race.

He said the word "bangsa" (nationality) referred to a person's citizenship and country of origin, not his race.

"If someone is a Malaysian then we must refer to him as one.

"If we say he is a Chinese, then that makes him a citizen of China. These are all terms with specific meanings."

Khoo cited as an example the United Nations (UN), which he said did not fight for any particular race.

"When we joined the UN, we call it the United Nations, and not the United Races.

"That's why Malaysia refers to one nation," he said.

Controversy over the term "pendatang" erupted last year when a Gerakan delegate from Johor, Tan Lai Soon, claimed all Malaysians were "pendatang" with the exception of the Orang Asli and Bumiputeras of Sabah dan Sarawak.

Tan reportedly said that the Malays, like the Indians and the Chinese, were "pendatang" because they originated from Indonesia.

His statement triggered a heated debate, with many Umno members slamming him over his remarks. – October 1, 2015.

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