

Zam blames Mahathir for Malay materialism

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By Nawar Firdaws

The ex-minister tells Malays to unite with other Malaysians against bad governance.

PETALING JAYA: A former cabinet minister has urged Malays still clinging to the idea of Malay nationalism to move forward and unite with other Malaysians against bad governance.

“We shouldn’t be talking about Malay nationalism any more because we need Malaysian nationalism to face public enemies like corruption and power abuse,” said former information minister Zainuddin Maidin in a comment on former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad’s latest blog entry.

“Holding on to the concept of Malay nationalism means we are narrowing our focus and our fight when we need to broaden them.”

Mahathir wrote of his fear that Malay materialism would eventually replace Malay nationalism and lead to the extinction of the race. “Will history books one day contain a paragraph that reads, ‘Once, there was a race known as the Malays but they have since become extinct due to avarice’? Only God knows,” he said.

Zainuddin told FMT he believed it was Mahathir who was responsible for instilling the materialist tendency among Malays when he was in power.

“What made the Malays materialistic was Mahathir himself,” he said. “He insisted that our race will become successful only when we have our own millionaires.”

He alleged that it had become a trend for Malays to join Umno to get rich, saying this was because Mahathir, who led the party for 22 years, propagated the idea that wealth could represent Malay success and pride.

However, Zainuddin also noted that Mahathir had hoped that wealth would be distributed to the less fortunate Malays. He said many had conveniently ignored this idea.

“We don’t have a proper check and balance mechanism like in Singapore, where there are laws to make sure opportunities are distributed fairly,” he said.

“In Malaysia, the individual goal now is to be rich. That’s why the question of nationalism no longer arises. It has been replaced with materialism.

“If we have awareness, we shouldn’t aim to revive Malay nationalism. We should focus on building Malaysian nationalism.”

Political analyst Ahmad Atory Hussain disagreed on the point that the Malays might one day become extinct.

He said they might, however, fall under the influence of foreign powers due to their fondness for wealth at the expense of national interests.

Atory is a retired professor formerly attached to Universiti Sains Malaysia.

“Most of the politicians today care more about money than political struggles,” he said. “This can bring down the country as these politicians can be bought by those with their own personal interests.

“Our country’s policies will then be dictated by the foreign powers that gave us the money. In the end, we won’t be the ones to decide our own future.”

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