

Malays cannot forget 'robbing' of Penang from Kedah, claims historian

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ALOR SETAR: After more than 200 years, the Malays in Penang and Kedah still hold a collective memory and consciousness of the allegedly dubious nature by which the island and Seberang Perai 'changed hands'.

Universiti Teknologi Petronas historian Prof Datuk Dr Ahmad Murad Merican claimed there is a narrative that casts much doubt on the 'agreement' between Francis Light and the then Sultan of Kedah, Sultan Abdullah.

"Most Pulau Pinang Malays and those in Kedah cannot forget what they described as the 'robbing' of Pulau Pinang and deception (on the agreement) by (Francis) Light. There was much doubt and anomaly.

"The Kedah Sultan was sovereign. Was Francis Light equally one?" queried the historian, who is also deputy president of the Penang Malay Historical and Heritage Society (Pewarisan) in an interview with *Bernama* recently.

Murad was asked to comment on a statement by Malaysian Historical Society (PSMCK), Kedah chairman Datuk Dr Wan Shamsuddin Mohd Yusof regarding Penang and Seberang Perai's lease agreements in 1791 and 1800.

Both agreements, he said, ought to be reviewed and Penang and Seberang Perai (formerly Province Wellesley) should be returned to the Kedah Sultan.

Wan Shamsuddin's suggestion which Murad urged all parties to consider, was based not solely on sentiments but also on several documents and evidences.

"The island and Seberang Perai belong to the Sultanate and the Sultan of Kedah, historically, socially and economically. The laws of Kedah were applied to the island before they were 'robbed' of by Common Law in 1807," he said.

Furthermore, the British he said, never fulfilled one of the conditions set in the treaty which was to protect Kedah from Siamese's aggression, a point also stressed by PSMCK scholar Dr Ibrahim Bakar.

Ibrahim in an earlier interview with *Bernama* said the agreement for Penang and Seberang Perai was deemed null and void due to the British's failure in protecting Kedah as stipulated by the agreement.

Murad also said the treaties were nullified in 1957 when the country gained independence from British and Penang as well as Seberang Perai should be reverted to Kedah automatically.

In fact, in 1955 according to him, the then Sultan of Kedah, Sultan Badlishah in a letter to the British had asked for the return of Seberang Perai, which he viewed as part of Kedah.

"The voices of subsequent Sultans of Kedah since Sultan Abdullah Mukaram Shah and Sultan Zainal Azilin Jiwa Muazzam Shah whom Light has met, has emphasised that memory and consciousness of the Sultanate," he said.

According to him, Kedah's claim on Penang or any claim to a territory either within nation states or between nation states was not something unusual or constitutionally and politically impossible.

"Examples abound. One of which is Hong Kong back with China. We have seen Dindings and Pangkor given back to Perak. And across the world, changes in borders within and of nation states are happening," he said. *-Bernama*

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