

■ **Move:** To conserve our foreign exchange

PM tells investors to seek foreign funds to invest abroad

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■ **KAMARUL YUNUS and RAMLAN SAID**

THE Government discourages Malaysians from seeking funds within the country when investing abroad in order to conserve Malaysia's foreign exchange, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"If everybody takes money within the country to invest abroad, our reserves will go down," he said at a dialogue held

in conjunction with the China Economic Conference in Petaling Jaya yesterday.

The Prime Minister was asked whether the Government has allocated special funds for Malaysians who want to invest abroad.

"Although we encourage Malaysians to invest abroad, they must remember that Malaysia is still a developing country and not a capital exporting country.

"If they want to invest abroad, they must raise money from abroad. It is possible to raise funds abroad. If they have the right skill and technology, they can have access to capital in the country where they intend to invest," he said.

On funds for "mom and pop" stores and businesses, Dr Mahathir said there are a lot of funds available for them as the Government considers them relevant to the country's economy.

Dr Mahathir was also asked about the ready market for halal products in China.

"We are trying to turn Malaysia into a hub of halal food production. In areas where there are Muslims, this will be a potential market for us.

"At the same time, we want to cooperate with the Chinese Muslims to venture into halal production in China," he said.

With a Muslim population of 60 million, China provides a

huge potential market for halal products.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's halal products are already recognised worldwide.

"Many countries would want to cooperate with us to venture in halal food production," he said, adding that Malaysians, especially Muslims, can tap the potential by opening up a halal food outlet or export the products to China.