

**Bad economy: Chinese may 'return' to China**  
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**Bede Hong**

Where do you think Malaysian Chinese would go if the economy does not improve?

As far as Dr Mahathir Mohamad is concerned, they will 'return' to China where a robust economy is at work.

The former premier said this when commenting on the lacklustre Malaysian economy which has produced grumblings among Umno grassroots for the lack of projects

A poor economy produces many unforeseen consequences, which include the brain drain and migration of non-Malays overseas, he cautioned.

"I know for the Malays - this might be unpleasant to hear - but if they (Chinese and Indians) do not enjoy the benefits, something might happen which we have to consider."

He said many Chinese businessmen have made their fortunes in China.

"There are many opportunities they found in China, and the expertise (from Malaysia) is brought there. In the past, they came to Malaysia because there were no opportunities (in mainland China). If there are little or no opportunities here, some would return to China," he said.

The former premier mentioned close associates who have settled down abroad: "Their children will grow up and not identify themselves as Malaysians."

"Who would take their place? Who would run the shops and businesses. I come here to Kulai, and I see most of the shops here are run by Chinese. Are the Malays ready to take over should they leave?" he asked to voices of 'no' in response.

Nasi Kandar in Perth

Mahathir also made a cryptic attack on Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, stating that the prime minister had left the country while Johor was flooded.

"Some leaders, they boast, oh my son is rich... They talk about their AUD25 million home. That's RM60 million. So strange, to have such a big house ... and there's no nasi lemak to be had. And we have a leader who went all the way to Perth to attend his brother's opening of a ... what ... nasi kandar restaurant.

"Between being in the country when it is in turmoil and overseaing at the opening of a nasi kandar restaurant, which is more important? Tentulah nasi kandar (Of course, nasi kandar!)," he said sarcastically.

He also attacked former ACA officer Mohd Ramli Manan: "He thinks that I cold-storaged him for six years ... Well, I think he is a kaki rasuah (corrupt person) ... that's what I think lah."

Mahathir said the corruption index has risen and that crime has also gone up.

"Corruption was a problem that the administration had pledged to eradicate ... and yet you see it rise ... we have gone up in the international corruption index."

"It's now not just a matter of what they want to snatch from you. You can lose your life, nowadays ... You have mothers killing babies," he said.

### **Umno Youth loses direction**

Mahathir also spoke on a change of his reading habits since being "censored" by the media.

"I no longer read the New Straits Times. I still read Utusan (Malaysia), although everything is negative in there now.

"I now read the Star. Their circulation is double that of NST you know? More than NST, which was the premier English newspaper. Now it has dropped."

"I can't blame them, because of the management ... Kalimullah (Hassan, NST deputy chairperson) yang cukup bijak (Kalimullah is very smart).

"He's angry at me ... but I was just confused about his name because it is a mix of a Hindu god and a Muslim cleric. Kali ... mullah," he quipped.

At a question-and-answer session later, Mahathir said Umno Youth has lost its direction.

"They have not taken the Afta (American Free Trade Act) discussions seriously.

"It is not merely a case of making demonstrations in front of the US embassy (protesting the [month-long] Israel-Lebanese war), which was planned ahead anyway. We want Umno youths to be activists ... to fight for and protect Malay rights," added the former Umno president.

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