

**Dr M: Chinese voters not always anti-BN**  
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Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad has moved in douse the anti-Chinese heat generated by the Sarawak election results, saying that the community had not always been against the BN.

"I think the Chinese before have supported BN very strongly. During my time, it was Chinese voters who gave me the two-thirds majority in 1999, so it is not true to say that the Chinese never support the BN.

"But there are things that need to be attended to," he told reporters.

On what BN could do to win back the Chinese votes that seemed to have drained away to the opposition , the fourth prime minister who held office for 22 years said: "It will take a lot ".

Saying that the Chinese would appreciate a good platform for business and trade, Mahathir (seated at table in photo) said that more opportunities in those should be opened to the community.

"And you know that during the reign of the fifth prime minister, there were no projects at all and opportunities for Chinese to do business so they had to go abroad and they were not happy about that," he said, slyly slipping in a verbal barb into his successor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who has since fallen out with him.

**Land of milk and honey**

"By and large. I think that the Chinese in this country know that they have developed very well and enriched themselves. This is the land of opportunity for the Chinese and I'm sure they know that," said Dr Mahathir, giving an example of the late Genting tycoon Lim Goh Tong.

Lim arrived in Malaysia from China at the age of 19 as a penniless labourer. Working his way up from petty trading to construction, he later developed Genting Highlands in the 1960s to what it is now.

Speaking at a press conference after launching the second print of his memoirs and autographing his book at the Kuala Lumpur International Book Fair, Mahathir was responding to the criticism by certain quarters that the Chinese are bent on achieving political power.

With the result from the recently-concluded Sarawak polls, DAP had achieved a landmark breakthrough, sweeping most of the Chinese-majority urban seats in the state.

While the party also saw support from the bumiputera communities increase, the Chinese community were largely 'blamed' for rejecting the ruling coalition, with Umno-owned Malay daily Utusan Malaysia spearheading the call for a 1Melayu, 1Bumi campaign to 'counter' the growing Chinese 'unity'.

### **Free speech birthed extremism**

Elaborating on his disagreement with the 1Melayu 1Bumi campaign, he said that though it was merely a 'reaction ' of the Malays to the Sarawak polls, it would only move to divide the country even more.

"I'm worried about this trend of Chinese being together with Chinese, and the Malays just together with Malays. Because this is a multi-racial country, we cannot have division," said Mahathir who is also the patron of Malay rights NGO Perkasa.

However, he said that the country has seen a rise in extremism.

For 50 years, we've had peace and stability because the races agreed to work together. They agreed that they should share this country fairly with each other.

"But because of this so-called free speech and freedom and all that, the extremist have come. They don't care about the country, they only care about themselves.

"I'm afraid many people are being attracted to them. So now we see in Sarawak, the Chinese are wanting to be very Chinese, don't want to work with others and Malays have now responded by proposing the same. I think this is bad for the country," he said.

But when asked who he were the 'extremists', he refused to elaborate.

"You know who they are. I don't have to tell you. You're very smart," he grinned.

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