

## **Zahid flexes Mandarin skills to woo Chinese**

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Newly minted Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi is flexing his Mandarin prowess in an attempt to woo the Chinese community, but it may not have impressed everyone.

In an interview with Chinese paper Oriental Daily, the Umno leader said he had studied Mandarin when he was in University in 1973.

*"Wo lai zi Ma Lai Ya da xue* (I came from University Malaya)," he said in Mandarin.

When the reporters asked if Zahid, who is also home minister, could speak more than just a few words in the language, he replied in Mandarin, "No problem, no big problem," to the applause of the Chinese reporters present, according to Oriental Daily.

He continued, *"Wo men dou shi Ma Lai Si Ya ren.*

*"Wo shi Ma Lai ren, but, Wo men dou shi Ma Lai Si Ya ren* (We are all Malaysians. I am Malay, but we are still all Malaysians)."

A reporter then quipped, "I think you speak Hokkien even better."

Zahid appeared to take the remark seriously and said his Hokkien accent sounded a little different from that of his friends.

The Umno leader has been attempting to bridge ties with the Chinese community since assuming the country's second in command, after Umno deputy Muhyiddin Yassin was ousted in a controversial cabinet reshuffle last month said to be aimed at purging critics of the 1MDB scandal.

However just days after his promotion Zahid raised the matter of doing away with vernacular schools, an issue close to the heart of the Chinese community.

### **'I have Chinese foster dad'**

Ahmad Zahid in the interview over the weekend also held up his Chinese foster father from his youth to prove he is not anti-Chinese.

Speaking in a mixture of English and Bahasa Malaysia, he said he was raised by the man and his Hainanese family from Standard One in primary school to Standard Six.

Zahid said he still maintains a close relationship with his foster father till today.

"Does that mean I am anti-Chinese? Because I have a Chinese foster father.

"I am not ultra-Malay. As a Malaysian leader I have to be fair to everybody," he said.

When asked about the time he had vowed to fight for Islam and the Malays, Zahid said although these are the principles that he holds, he never forgets the other races, religions, cultures and languages.

To a question that he is seen as being tough, the DPM cum home minister said he is tough in the sense of being firm in taking action against illegal activities.

"Everybody knows I am colour blind in taking action, but I have to be seen fair and following law and regulations."

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