

Dr M: I never endorsed Forest City project

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Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad today clarified that he had never endorsed the Forest City project in Johor.

In a statement, Mahathir said he was still an opponent of the project which was initiated during the Najib Abdul Razak administration.

Mahathir said he had handed a certificate to project developer Country Garden Pacificview Sdn Bhd on Feb 17, 2019, as a recognition of the company's pledge to build affordable housing.

"It is not an endorsement of the Forest City project," said Mahathir.

On Dec 26 last year, Najib, in his first speaking engagement at a major business forum since being convicted last July, accused Mahathir of handing the certificate to Country Garden despite having repeatedly condemned the project.

In the run-up to the 2018 parliamentary elections, Mahathir had repeatedly accused Najib of favouring foreign interest over local interest in the Forest City project.

Elaborating on the matter today, Mahathir said his opposition to the Forest City project was due to its focus on property buyers from China and the fact that the majority of staff that he saw in the area were from China.

Mahathir said the project could not be cancelled by the Pakatan Harapan government because it would involve penalties.

"All we could do was to advise Country Garden to set low-cost housing as well that Malaysians could afford. Country Garden agreed," he said.

Hence, when the Housing and Local Government Ministry launched the National Community Policy on Feb 17, 2019, he had handed certificates of appreciation to developers involved in providing affordable housing.

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