

**Mahathir: Politics is money, that's the reality**  
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Former and current BN leaders have admitted that Umno and MCA have used money in questionable ways during internal and legislative elections, according to a new report on political financing.

mahathir ikmal presidential lecture 290410 "There can be no escaping from the fact that politics is money. You see, without money you just cannot move," said former premier and Umno president Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He was speaking in an interview last year with Transparency International-Malaysia (TI-M), which published this in a report Reforming Political Financing in Malaysia, launched last Sunday.

Because of the inherent link between politics and money, Mahathir said Umno has had to raise money from members of the public, resulting in rent-seeking behaviour.

"People in Malaysia don't need much persuasion. They believe if they contribute, they might get some leverage," said Mahathir, who headed Umno for 22 years.

"So when election comes, people just come... and the money taken is sometimes without receipt. "So, it depends on whether you're going to be honest or not."

Mahathir went on to claim that vote-buying has been prevalent during the party's triennial elections and accused "practically everyone" elected into the supreme council of using such means.

"So you can say that Umno central committee is actually made up of corrupt people," he said.

Mahathir then related his own experience in 2006, when his bid to become a delegate to the party AGM that year was allegedly thwarted due to vote-buying by his opponents.

book reforming political financing in malaysia 240510 He was referring to his failed attempt to be voted in as one of the seven delegates from the Kubang Pasu division, which he had led for more than three decades.

"I lost. Because Umno headquarters sent money to pay all those people not to vote for me. The division leader got RM2,000, each member RM200. I was disgusted, you know? RM200, I'm so cheap?" Mahathir said tongue-in-cheek.

"How much can you buy with RM200, how much food, how many plates of mee? You sell the power to determine the leader for RM200?"

Warlord contractors

The TI-M report includes excerpts of interview with former finance minister and Umno treasurer Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who spoke on how the party has fed rent seekers through government contracts.

NONE He argued that, because the contracts usually have to change a number of hands,

profits would trickle down. This has led to shoddy work in infrastructure projects.

"All these hospitals cracking up, stadiums collapsing, are all the result of warlord contractors," he said.

"It's not always a result of corruption. They could be due to bad design, etc, because there's little margin for contractors to make because the top has been creamed off by these greedy politicians. It breeds itself.

"If you just became a warlord, and you don't give money, they are not interested in you. You want to amass funds, illegally, to feed your followers."

MCA leader Dr Chua Soi Lek, when he was party No 2 last year, revealed that many BN candidates spend more during a general election than the ceiling stipulated in election laws.

NONE "The limit on candidates' election expenses is RM200,000, but the official accounting does not reflect the true spending," he said.

"Usually a candidate spends between RM500,000 to RM1 million during campaigning."

In the 234-page report, TI-M criticised Umno and its BN allies for its business interests as well as its control of media organisations.

It also made 19 recommendations to stem corruption and improve transparency of political financing.

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