

Mahathir: Chinese voters are strategic-minded

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KOTA BARU: Chinese voters in the country are strategic-minded people, unlike the Malays who tended to vote along party lines and based on raw sentiment.

This, said former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, was partly the reason why there was reportedly a small swing of Chinese voters towards the Opposition in the last two by-elections.

Using his experiences in 1969 as an example, Dr Mahathir said that he lost in the South Kota Setar parliament seat because the Chinese supported PAS more as they feared his supposed reputation as an ultra-Malay.

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TUN DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD

"I know the Chinese dislike PAS, especially with their political ideology of wanting an Islamic country and so on so forth. Still, the Chinese voted for it because they disliked my

reputation as an ultra. It was a choice between the devil and the deep blue sea and the Chinese made me the devil," Dr Mahathir said after giving a talk on "Malay Leadership in a Globalised Era" at the Grand Riverview Hotel.

The talk was organised by the Kelantan People's Action Council (MTRK) headed by Datuk Paduka Ibrahim Ali, where among those present were MTRK patron Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, former Kok Lanas MP Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad and former menteri besar Tan Sri Muhammad Yaakop.

Asked about PAS' continued rule of Kelantan, Dr Mahathir said that

personally as an Umno member, he did not want Umno to lose but added that Umno's focus must be on defending its political strength on the national front.

There was nothing new about PAS holding on to power in Kelantan as the Islamist party has done so since 1990.

"The power in this country comes from the federal level. Not the state governments. As for Kelantan, the people of the state must decide the future of Kelantan. It is left to the rakyat to decide."

There must be an effort by them to ensure that the Federal Government pays more attention to the

state, he said.

On the National Union of Journalists' (NUJ) call for Internet bloggers to be recognised, Dr Mahathir said that the Government must be willing to accept constructive criticism from certain blogging sites.

Of course, those who spread slander and inaccuracies should not have their websites recognised, he added.

"Certain bloggers are doing something good otherwise why would people want to read their sites. Registering of bloggers would be difficult as some may host their sites overseas, so it is difficult to control."