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Dr M: Win hearts of Chinese

Govt must provide more business opportunities for them, says ex-PM

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KUALA LUMPUR: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has refuted suggestions that the Chinese do not support Barisan Nasional.

The former Prime Minister said the Chinese community had always stood firm behind the coalition, even when Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim created a ruckus after being sacked from the Government.

He said that in the 1999 general election, Barisan still managed to maintain a two-thirds majority because of strong Chinese support.

Speaking to newsmen at the International Book Fair at the Putra World Trade Centre yesterday, Dr Mahathir said the Government must continue to provide more trade and business opportunities for the Chinese to regain their support.

He said the Chinese needed opportunities to spread their wings in the sector, as they were very business and trade-oriented.

Dr Mahathir said this in response to concerns over dwindling Chinese support as observed in the 12th general election, subsequent by-elections and the recent Sarawak election.

At the function, Dr Mahathir autographed his latest book *A Doctor in the House*.

Umno supreme council member Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah had also called on Barisan comrades to stop accusing those who did not vote the coalition as being ungrateful.

"As a player in the democratic system, we must respect the voters' right to choose whichever party they prefer.

"We must accept the voters' decision with an open heart even if the result does not favour us," Saifuddin said.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri

Najib Tun Razak had taken various new approaches to win the hearts of multi-racial Malaysians.

"If we choose to blame them (those who did not vote Barisan), how are we going to face them in the next general election?"

In George Town, Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said MCA should not contest in the next general election if its president Datuk Seri Chua Soi Lek was against "Chinese fighting Chinese".

"It should not contest in any seats where DAP is contesting and let us win," he said.

The DAP secretary-general said this when asked by the Chinese media at a press conference here about Dr Chua criticising the DAP during the recent Sarawak election.

It was reported that Dr Chua, in his speech during the Sarawak election, had said DAP was making use of the Chinese to fight against other Chinese but had no guts to go against PAS.



Most wanted doc: Dr Mahathir signing autographs at the International Book Fair at the Putra World Trade Centre yesterday. — Bernama