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Lies, errors in Dr M's post, says Rahman

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CHINA DEALS: He is helping to destroy the Malaysian economy, says minister

KUALA LUMPUR

DATUK Abdul Rahman Dahlan lashed out at former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad for criticising deals made by the country with China recently.

The minister in the prime minister's department said by resorting to lies and baseless allegations to undermine foreign trade deals and investments, Dr Mahathir was helping to destroy Malaysia's economy.

In response to Dr Mahathir's blog post yesterday titled "Najib's China Trip", Rahman said it contained errors and misconceptions that were either deliberate or lacked understanding of the details of the agreements secured.

"It is hard to take Dr Mahathir's words seriously nowadays," said Rahman, who is also Barisan Nasional strategic communications director, in a statement.

"Due to his political agenda and personal vengeance, he has U-turned on so many things he had said in the past. Among these include his views on Anwar Ibrahim, Bersih, George Soros, DAP and his call for foreign intervention."

"The crux of Dr Mahathir's criticism seems to centre on the soft loan that Malaysia will take to build the East Coast Rail Line (ECRL) project, which he said will increase the Malaysian government's debts con-

siderably, and that the main contractor would be a Chinese company.

"The soft loan given by the Export-Import Bank of China is on very favourable terms, with a low interest rate, and has a 20-year tenure.

"It is also denominated in ringgit and not in United States dollar or Chinese yuan as alleged by Dr Mahathir. This makes Tun Mahathir's argument of foreign exchange risk a moot point," he said.

Rahman also said despite Chinese involvement, a significant portion of construction would be subcontracted to local companies, and that there would be transfer of technology in the process.

He dismissed the allegation that on a per kilometre basis, the ECRL was overpriced, and said the RM55 billion price tag is inclusive of the cost of all rolling stock, signalling systems and sup-

port infrastructure.

"The ECRL is expected to add 1.5 per cent to gross domestic product growth per year to the east coast states of Peninsular Malaysia and can help the states catch up in development with the west coast states.

"Additionally, the ECRL will directly connect the Kuantan and Kemaman ports in the east coast with Port Klang on the west coast, resulting in a strategic advantage in logistics handling and shipping for Malaysia," he said.



Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan