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DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

# DR M CRITICISED FOR PLAYING RACIAL CARD

Ex-PM is trying to sow discord among races, says Liow

SERI NOR NADIAH KORIS, AWAINA ARBEE AND HANA NAZ HARUN  
**BENTONG**  
news@nst.com.my

**T**RANSPORT Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai yesterday lambasted Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad for playing up racial sentiments with regards to development projects in the country.

He regretted that the former prime minister, who is working with the opposition, was trying to sow discord among the races.

He said it was sad that Dr Mahathir had exploited the Forest City development project in Iskandar Malaysia and the proposed East Coast Rail Line for political mileage.

"I regret that Dr M has turned these projects into a racial issue, provoking the people to hate China and the Chinese. We respect him as a leader but today he has changed.

"He should not use the racial approach. The situation has worsened as DAP is playing along. They try to label MCA as an agent of China and create the perception that this is a racial issue," he said after presenting aid at SJKC Khai Mun Pagi here.

Liow said China's investments were important for Malaysia's economic growth and investors were aware that they had to follow local laws if they wanted to invest here.

"When Dr M turned the investments into a racial issue for political expediency, I feel he is wrong as we need foreign direct investments to become a developed nation," he said.

Deputy Transport Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Kaprawi said the High-Speed Rail (HSR) project was vital to boost the nation's economy.

"It is strange because as a former prime

minister, he should want the best for the country.

"During his tenure (as prime minister), Dr Mahathir had undertaken huge development projects that required huge loans," he said.

Aziz said investors were keen to invest in Malaysia due to its strong economic fundamentals.

"Malaysia has a lot of resources which are not being exploited and the HSR project would contribute to the country's economic growth," he said.

Dr Mahathir, in an interview with Singapore's *The Sunday Times*, had reportedly opposed the HSR, citing supposedly financial constraints faced by the Malaysian government.

He was also critical of Chinese property buyers in Johor's Forest City, telling the republic's English daily that the deal to build the 350km rail link between the two cities may be called off if the opposition came to power in the next general election.

In **JOHOR BARU**, Johor MIC chief Datuk M. Asojan said Dr Mahathir was not practising what he preached.

This involved the implementation of the Look East Policy, which focused on attracting investors and expertise from East Asian powerhouse economies such as Japan and South Korea, he said.

"Now that he is no longer a prime minister, he is making a U-turn on what he had stood for before. He is criticising the HSR project.

"When he was a leader, he did what he wanted, but now, he criticises anyone who comes close to his way of thinking," Asojan said.

Asojan said the HSR was an important project to uplift the people's economy.

"Let's say we do not have the HSR project. How are we going to ensure there are economic activities in quarries, petrol stations and that lorry drivers will have jobs?

"The aim of the current government is to keep up with progress. The HSR will ensure job opportunities for the people and construc-

tion-related industries will thrive over the next 30 years," he said.

Asojan also rejected Dr Mahathir's statement that Chinese property buyers in the Forest City development project near Gelang Patah would be given citizenship.

"Dr Mahathir is welcome to check with the National Registration Department on how many Japanese and Koreans have become Malaysians since the Look East Policy," he said.

Johor Baru Tiong-Hua Association president Datuk Seri Tey Kim Chai urged Dr Mahathir to respect the current government and not condemn development projects that would benefit the people.

"The HSR project will benefit people from Malaysia and Singapore as it will take them only one-and-a-half-hours to commute from Kuala Lumpur to Singapore and vice versa."

In **KUALA LUMPUR**, Barisan Nasional Youth said it would meet non-governmental organisations and host a forum to explain the need for economic giants to invest in Malaysia.

The coalition's deputy youth chief Senator Khairul Azwan Harun said there were too many misconceptions on investments from China.

"Many opposition leaders manipulate and instil fear in the public by claiming that we are selling our country to China."

He said China had the technical expertise, and this was the basis why Malaysia was attracting investments from the economic giant.

"They will bring in money and advanced technology to our country and this will result in a trickle-down effect where all of us will benefit," he added.

He said BN Youth would engage with stakeholders such as the International Trade and Industry Ministry, chambers of commerce and other relevant bodies to explain the rationale for major investments.

"If they (the opposition) stick to the political angle, we will lose sight of our aim and it could cost us greatly in terms of economic opportunities."

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