

Newspaper	MALAYSIAKINI
Date	16 JANUARY 2017

## Dr M has gone too far, says Johor sultan

Malaysiakini – 16 Jan 2017

Johor ruler Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar has blasted former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad for claiming that Johor is "surrendering land to the Chinese", and said the veteran politician has "gone too far".

In an exclusive interview with *The Star* published today, the sultan is reported as saying he was "deeply offended and hurt" by Mahathir's comments made over the past weeks.

"Enough is enough. I have so far restrained myself from commenting on the controversy on Forest City generated by Dr Mahathir and his supporters. But Dr Mahathir has gone too far with his twisting of the issue. He is making allegations that 700,000 mainland Chinese will stay in JB, and that citizenships will be given away, and that huge tracts of land have been sold to the Chinese. He is giving the impression that Johor is surrendering land to the Chinese and that we are giving up our sovereignty, comparing even how we gave up Singapore to the British," *The Star* reported the sultan as saying in an interview at Istana Bukit Serene.

The sultan also pointed out that a large portion of Forest City would comprise condominiums that are to be built on reclaimed land.

### 'Take a look at Singapore'

"I would like to ask Dr Mahathir if these foreign buyers can just take their apartments back home or carry off an inch of the reclaimed land.

"Take a look at the number of foreigners who have bought properties in Singapore. Are the Singaporeans in that tiny island republic worried? No, they are not and they, in fact, welcome affluent expatriates there," the sultan is quoted as saying. The situation in Singapore, he said, was unlike Mahathir's attempts to allegedly create fear using race for political motives. He (Mahathir) is not stupid, he's just selfish and opportunistic," Sultan Ibrahim added.

Commenting further, the sultan said that Forest City's mixed development project was not targeted at Chinese investors, but for anyone around the world, including Johoreans.

"This project will increase Johor's land size and sovereignty," he said in noting that the spillover effect would include revenue for the state government in terms of taxes and about 200,000 job opportunities. The sultan said this in response to a series of comments and blog posts by Mahathir, who had **claimed** that huge tracts of land around Johor Bahru were being sold to foreigners with no restriction, and there would be mass immigration to take up residence in these new cities.

Mahathir had raised his concerns based on a Bloomberg report that claimed Forest City would accommodate 700,000 new houses upon its completion. This was on top of 60 similar other projects within Iskandar Malaysia around Johor Bahru, which could add another 500,000 houses.