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Newspaper	THE STAR
Date	23 JANUARY 2017

China's Global Times: Chinese shocked and irked by Dr M's claims

The Star - 23/1/2017

PETALING JAYA: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's scathing remarks over China's investment in the Forest City project in Johor Baru has irked Beijing-based *Global Times*.

The influential publication, regarded as the mouthpiece of the Chinese government, lambasted the former prime minister and his fellow Parti Pribumi Bersatu leader Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin for regarding the project as a threat to national sovereignty.

It reported that Chinese netizens were reacting in shock, anger and disappointment over the remarks.

"Some Chinese netizens expressed their disappointment, saying that it is shocking to see the country's former leader making this kind of statement while others called for a boycott of Malaysia.

"Shall we boycott Malaysia for this?" netizen jiemohu, wrote on Sina Weibo.

Another netizen yuchundaxiang-

lianzhuli posted that "being an old friend for over a decade, Dr Mahathir had turned on China. It's a big deal".

In a series of comments and blogs, Dr Mahathir claimed that huge tracts of land around Johor Baru were being sold to foreigners with no restriction and there would be mass immigration to take up residence in these new cities.

He singled out Forest City, developed by a China-based company,

claiming that "already thousands of units had been completed and sold to mainland Chinese".

The article also noted the clash between Dr Mahathir and the Sultan of Johor in a growing dispute over the RM170bil Forest City project.

It also expressed concern over Dr Mahathir's comment that the prime land would be owned and occupied by foreigners.

The Chinese Embassy, the article pointed out, harshly criticised Dr

Mahathir for adopting Sino-friendly policy while in office but fanned anti-Chinese sentiment upon retirement.

The embassy also dismissed claims that the Chinese investment would lead to the stealing of job opportunities in Malaysia.

"But as the Sultan had said, if the political spin used by Dr Mahathir is left unchecked, it would drive away investors," reported *Global Times* in another article.