

'No foreign ideologies in schools'

PM: Malaysia is China's friend but BRI comic book in schools inappropriate

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia will not allow Chinese ideology to be taught in schools although the country will remain friendly to China for trade purposes, says Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Prime Minister said that as Malaysia was a multiracial country, undue foreign influences were not welcome.

"Malaysia has always been regarded as a friend of China, except in the early years of independence, when China was practising communism and exported it to Malaysia. We do not want that.

"Now, China has a new policy and this policy has benefited China very much, making it one of the richest countries in the world.

"Rich countries are good markets. For Malaysia, there are opportunities for trade, and we want to continue with our cooperation with China," said Dr Mahathir, who added that race consciousness was still very alive among Malaysians.

"We don't want our people to think that after we were influenced by the West, we were then influenced by China.

"I believe that China will be a great influence in the future, but for the moment, it is not for us to promote China's ideas and ideologies,

but to find out how we can benefit from them.

"So, we are not going to influence the minds of the young people.

"The young people must understand the problems, strategies and policies of our own country first.

"As much as we did not like the Western influence in our set of beliefs and schools, we do not want any other country to have an undue influence on our young people," he said in reference to the Education Ministry's ban on the circulation of a comic book titled *Belt and Road Initiative for Win Winism* to educational institutions, including national schools.

An audience member asked the

Prime Minister about the comic book's ban during a question-and-answer session at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Praxis Conference 2019 here yesterday.

The comic book made headlines recently after former premier Datuk Seri Najib Razak alleged that it was being distributed in school, with police saying they were taking statements from relevant parties on the matter.

Former DAP member Hew Kuan Yau defended the comic, saying its aim was to educate the students on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

At the conference, Dr Mahathir said what was important was good

ties for commerce.

"We are friendly with everyone. We do not care what system they have. We are a trading nation. So, we need markets - we cannot afford to make enemies.

"Of course, there will be people who will create difficulties, but we have to tolerate them.

"That is why Malaysia is able to trade with nearly 200 countries, and has benefited from such trade.

"In future, that will be our strategy," said Dr Mahathir, who added that Malaysia would not support BRI blindly.

"We have to find out exactly what it is. We cannot just support without a proper study."