

MCA sees red over Dr M's remarks

Wee: Ex-PM has not updated knowledge of ethnic wealth distribution in M'sia

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KUALA LUMPUR: MCA has expressed outrage at a statement by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who said that the Chinese are a "wealthy lot" and that it was "unhealthy" that they lived in urban areas.

Party president Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong said the former prime minister had not updated himself with the statistics of wealth distribution among the ethnic groups in Malaysia.

He said there were enough recent reports to show that the Chinese, in all levels of income, had already declined.

"I am not sure if Dr Mahathir is pretending not to know, or whether he is merely playing the racial card," he said.

Dr Wee also regretted that DAP

failed to respond to Dr Mahathir's remark on wealth distribution.

"Surely DAP knows that the remarks by Dr Mahathir is erroneous, or is DAP now so afraid of telling Dr Mahathir off?" said Dr Wee, who added that Dr Mahathir should stop perpetuating the myth that Malaysian Chinese were rich, as such stereotyping was harmful to racial harmony.

He said many ordinary Chinese were struggling to keep their jobs.

In an interview with the Hong Kong-based *Asia Times*, Dr Mahathir said Malaysian Chinese were a "wealthy lot", with the majority of them living in urban centres, and that it represented an "unhealthy trend".

Dr Wee said each day, tens of thousands of Malaysian Chinese crossed over to Singapore to work.

"These are ordinary wage earn-

ers who go to work there to earn an honest living, and are certainly not wealthy.

"The pasar malam stallholders and the smallholders in plantations are not rich either," he said.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Chinese Associations Malaysia (Huazong) said no one should perpetuate such a misleading and discriminating narrative of the Malaysian Chinese.

Its president Tan Sri Goh Tian Chuan said such stereotyping could lead to the disruption of unity and harmony among the different races, and could ultimately harm the country.

"Politicians should always be cautious when they speak in public, and refrain from making such an inflammatory remark.

"It may go out of control and incite hatred and animosity against

Chinese businesses, and rip the nation apart," he said in a statement yesterday.

The attainment of wealth, he said, was largely attributed to hard work and determination to improve one's life, other than the policies of the government of the day.

Due to the limited opportunities in the public sector, be they government departments, agencies or government-linked companies, the Chinese were left with few choices but to venture into the private sector, he added.

"It is deeply regretful that all these years, the community had to endure such unfair and discriminatory remarks such as 'the Chinese are rich', 'the Chinese are an ungrateful lot', 'the Chinese are outsiders', 'what else do the Chinese want?', 'balik tongsan' (go back to China) and 'the Chinese are squat-

ters' hurled at them by unscrupulous politicians looking for political mileage at the expense of racial unity and harmony.

"If exploited by extremists, such hostile and hurtful remarks may ruin the beloved nation that we have all built together and zealously protected after all these years," he said.

Goh also urged politicians to stop exploiting race and religious issues for political gain, and instead strive for a fairer economic policy to foster greater unity and harmony among Malaysians of different races and religions.

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