

Mahathir in his own words

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Former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has never shied away from controversy.

The 79-year-old, who handed over the premiership to a hand-picked successor in 2003, had spent his 22 years in office frequently hitting the headlines with his provocative remarks, drawing both condemnation and applause. Below we list some of his most infamous comments:



On America's war on terror

If innocent people who died in the attack on Afghanistan and those who have been dying from lack of food and medical care in Iraq are considered collaterals, are the 3,000 who died in New York and the 200 in Bali also just collaterals whose deaths are necessary for operations to succeed?

March 2003

Their strategy to fight terrorism is through attacking Muslim countries and Muslims, whether they are guilty or not.

June 2003

They made a mistake in Iraq. Now in Iraq, instead of feeling happy and saying thanks to the liberators, they are killing the liberators.

October 2003

On Australia

This country stands out like a sore thumb trying to impose its European values in Asia as if it is the good old days when people can shoot aborigines without caring about human rights.

December 2002

Australia has made known to the world that it wants to be the deputy sheriff of this region. It's very difficult to get along with deputy sheriffs.

October 2003

On Europeans

They are very clever, brave and have an insatiable curiosity... unfortunately they are also very greedy and like to take forcibly the territories and rights of other people.

The culture and the values which they will force us to accept will be hedonism, unlimited quest for pleasure, the satisfaction of base desires, particularly sexual desires. Our way of life must be the

same as their way of life. Asian values do not exist to them.

June 2003

On Jews

The Jews for example are not merely hook-nosed, but understand money instinctively.

1970, the Malay Dilemma

Later, on the drop in the value of the Malaysian currency:

We are Muslims and the Jews are not happy to see Muslims' progress. We may suspect that they have an agenda but we do not want to accuse them... If viewed from Palestine, the Jews have robbed Palestinians of everything but they cannot do this in Malaysia, so they do this.

October 1997

On Muslims

Disunited, confused about Islam, fighting each other for power and lacking in essential knowledge and skills... Muslims today have reached the lowest point of their development.

January 2003

On politicians

On gay British MPs:

The British people accept homosexual ministers but if they ever come here bringing their boyfriend along, we will throw them out.

November 2001

On Arnold Schwarzenegger's election as governor of California, despite allegations about his past:

"I think he had every right to contest. People do not grow up to think that, 'Ah, I'm going to be the next governor and therefore I must deny myself all the pleasures of life'."

October 2003

On retiring:

I'm 78 years old. That is old and I think I should be retiring to give other people a chance to do better.

October 2003